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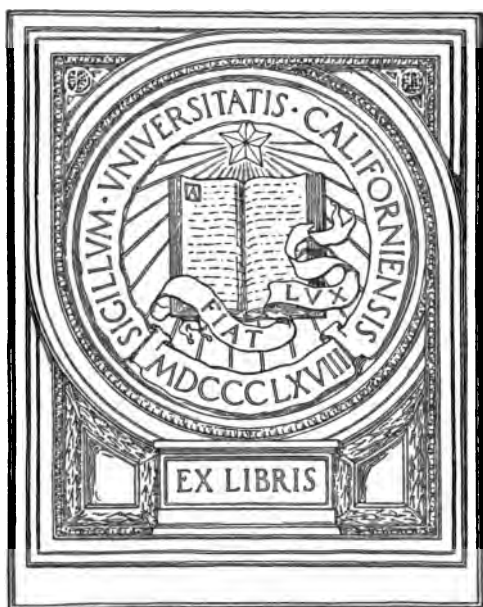
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1851.

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ANTONY.

UNIV. OF
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Part II.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER V.

A PICNIC AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THE end of August was at hand ; and the friendly families of the neighbourhood had agreed on assembling for a picnic in the forest, some few miles from Ponterry, on the banks of the beautiful waterfalls, which formed one of the favourite and most generally-visited scenes in the country.

Ernest had engaged to drive Miss Nayton and her brother thither, in his phaeton, to meet the Allingworths. They knew Lord Darcy was to be there also, for Kathleen had learnt from Clara, on the preceding day, in a confidential chat, that the nobleman had, indeed, made overtures to Sir William for

the hand of Nina, and that her father had cordially received them, as he had long desired such an alliance; that Nina had been afterwards summoned to an interview with her father alone; but that the result of this was unknown to Clara.

Ernest, however, flattered himself that he could guess the result.

Many were the pleasant anticipations entertained by the assembling friends, and so cloudless was the sky, that there seemed little fear but that even a Welsh picnic, in Welsh mountains, would pass off without rain.

The upper cascade was chosen as the most beautiful spot for the place of rendezvous, and here, beneath the thick foliage of the beech, and on the mossy carpet that mantled the rocks, not far from which the mass of water, plunging down from a considerable height, fell as a sheet of metal into the pool beneath, and dashed up, with clouds of foam, thousands of glistening drops that flew on all sides, like sparks from the anvil. Here the pleasure-seekers met and laid out the social repast.

Then, when it was over, and an agreement made to meet there again before "set of sun," for a dance beneath the trees, the company formed themselves into groups, and strolled away into the wood, and up the rugged mountains behind the waterfall.

Kathleen was led away by Lady Allingworth, and Clara with some others.

Antony was lingering still under the beeches, watching Ernest, as with his thoughts apparently absent from his occupation, he cast pebbles across a little bay in the river, where the water lay still, and saw them bound and rebound away on the surface.

"Which way, went Nina?" he asked presently, of a sudden of Antony.

"Our knight lacks chivalry indeed, if he needs a sentinel to watch for him," was the reply.

"I saw her last by the side of that sister Adelaide of hers, my Lady H——, who was ever chilling as an icicle, but whom marriage seems to have wafted to an Arctic zone, there to be consolidated into an iceberg. Darcy too, and half-a-dozen empty-brained fellows, whose company has no pleasant effect upon my temper, were crowding round her, so I deemed it wisest to retreat."

"Nina is not herself to-day, Ernest; you were beside her at dinner, did you not remark it?"

Antony had, during the repast, as usual, kept aloof from where he would most have loved to be; continuing, however, still observant of Nina. Lord Darcy and Ernest were on either side of her, but she had appeared silent, and Antony, by his quick penetration, thought uneasy also. This, he fancied, probably arose from her annoyance at the neighbourhood of Lord Darcy, who seemed to be pouring into her ear bold, wild jests, which might have possessed anything but the charm of amusement for her.

"Her father's eye was upon her, and obliged her to endure Darcy's conversation. Besides, she is, I think, ill; once, when her hand was in contact with mine, I felt she trembled," said Ernest, and remembered with gratification that she had several times during the meal turned to him with an almost cheerful air, as if to seek pleasure in his conversation.

Above them rose the precipitous shelf of the cascade, and above the glittering mass hung, on either side, the dark form of a rock. These two stood confronting one another, as giant rivals, frowning on the waters and on each other, and separated by a wide and dangerous gulf.

These rocks had, evidently, at some former period been torn asunder by the force or weight of the river.

As the two friends gazed upwards at them, wrapt in their own thoughts, the figures of Nina and Lord Darcy appeared on the nearest summit; he being too much occupied in speaking to her, to observe the young men below. Nina, however, on perceiving them, showed, as Ernest thought, a gesture of pleasure, and she was already wending her way with her companion downwards towards them, when Ernest, who lost not a moment in springing up the bank to meet her, was at her side.

Her welcoming looks, and the willingness with which she placed her arm in that of Ernest's, rejoiced him with the certainty that his presence was a plea-

sure and a relief to her, while Lord Darcy cast an indolent glance of contempt upon the intruder, in whom he little suspected he beheld an eager and determined rival.

Antony perceived all, but carefully placed himself so as to be unseen, and the three, strolling downwards, passed close beneath the tree, whose stem alone concealed him from them. How swiftly beat his heart as Nina went by him thus attended! Did her quick ear catch a sigh, that she stopped, as if listening for a moment? or was it an instinctive attraction to that spot, that she glanced hastily towards it? But Antony held his breath, and stirred not a leaf till she had gone on; for why should he intrude a thought of himself upon her at such a moment?

They were now gone, and he was alone—alone, looking up to those dark precipices, and then down into the whirling water at his feet.

He was in a mood so wildly sad, that had the rocks quaked, had he known that in another moment they must have fallen and annihilated him, he would not, he could not, have stirred a limb to escape. He bent over the brink of the pool to search the bottom with his piercing eyes, but only the tumbling and splashing of the upper surface could he see, while he knew not how mightily the angry voice of the waters roared around his unconscious ears.

Thus, had he deafened his own spirit to the loud and passionate voice of his heart-sorrows; he would

not listen to them—he would not even hear them—he would pay no heed to his own misery—but only strive and hope for Ernest's happiness; and yet the sound was there still, when he thought he had silenced it—still, still it was there. There, within, was ever rolling that torrent of his passion, too profound to be fathomed by the eyes of others.

“How near I am now to death!” he thought, as he felt that if he let go the rock he clasped, he must be precipitated into the abyss. “Yes, near, but at the same time how far off, if God's hand stands between me and it! So has it been before this. I have looked death some few times in the face, but that Hand hovered between us, and I am unclaimed. Ah, wherefore?”

How many of us ask this question, at those periods of our life when prosperity beams not for us,—when others bask in it, and we are in the shade; and it is difficult at such times to find the answer. We seldom remember in our dejection that there is sin and ingratitude in the mind that complains because it is not absorbed in happiness. We forget that we do not live only to enjoy, and that in the inanity of perfect bliss we could not carry on the great work we have to do, and for which we exist; we could not sustain the constant battle with our nature—we could not discipline our eager hopes into patience, create cheerfulness out of disappointment, holiness out of suffering, and keep perseverance and faith ever toil-

ing for the mastery within us, without which our task here cannot be completed.

Antony felt this now, as indeed he had often before felt it. But is it not a lesson we may all learn by rote, and say in our reason over and over again (as a child repeats a form of words without comprehending their meaning), we know it, yet cannot realise it to the heart?

As Antony hung over the waters, Death seemed before him, beckoning invitingly, temptingly, with an aspect of serenity, promising a longed for repose, an end of sorrow, a blotting out of weary, weary time, a sweet forgetfulness.

But his philosophy was at hand to aid him—(with some men, philosophy is their religion, with others, as with Antony, their religion is philosophy)—and he smiled away the spectre.

“My love of thee, oh, Nina! cannot be banished, cannot be quenched; but it shall not torture, it shall ennoble me; it shall not tempt me into murmurs, but sanctify my whole soul, my whole existence. For is it not a privilege to love that which is holy and heavenly as thyself? Manfully and cheerfully then will I go forth, by God’s help, to meet the coming life, which must be colourless and dark without this beacon-fire.”

He now turned away from the angry waters; their turmoil was no longer in harmony with his thoughts. He looked up into the liquid blue of the sky. He

looked on the calm earth reposing in the sunlight. He looked towards the majestic forms of the mountains that stretched out their giant peaceful arms above him, as if inviting the lonely one to their quiet regions, and the tranquillity of nature reached even to the depths of his inmost spirit.

Antony became for the moment resigned.

That Nina herself should never be disturbed by an idea of the nature of his feelings towards her, he had long resolved. It would have given him a certain mournful satisfaction to have revealed the deep secret of his love to the one it most concerned, but this he firmly denied himself. He felt now each day the importance, indeed the necessity, of his coming separation from her; for the restraint he was forced to wear in her presence was daily becoming more and more difficult to preserve, and he therefore thought he could almost rejoice that September was so near at hand.

He wandered up the bank of the waterfall to the rocks above, and then laid down in the high fern and underwood, beneath the forest trees, and thought of Ernest—of how he was probably at that moment occupied—of how Nina was imperceptibly learning to honour and esteem him more and more—of how the glow of friendship was, with her, perhaps even now kindling into love; and his heart sank, low and feeble within him, as he strove to realise to his mind the union of these two noble natures.

The vision hovered over his thoughts, and now his

fancy placed before him the round earth hanging in the azure ether, attended by her lesser companion, as she wandered through space.

“Beautifully are the land and water wedded together on that bright globe,” he thought, “while the moon looks on them radiant with a mournful smile, as of an unhappy love, and yet ever possessing a gentle influence over them, that emanates with the light which earth and moon alike receive and impart to one another from the Universal Sun. And might it not be thus beautiful,” (and now his fancy wandered back to Ernest and Nina,) “might it not be thus beautiful, were those two—one! and Antony thus attending them? But, nay!—impossible—away! torturing imagination—away!”

Then forcing his mind from the melancholy subject, he thought of his sister, and dwelt with pleasure on his having been able to be to her a support and comfort in her trial, and rejoiced to believe that health and peace were again returning to her young spirit. Then he remembered his father—his banishment from his country and his children, and sought comfort for himself in contemplating the possibility of the deaf son, the disliked and despised, being one day enabled to summon back his parents from so long an exile, to ease and happiness.

He was disturbed in these meditations by the advance of two figures over the moss near which he

lay : they were engaged intently in their conversation, and he recognised Ernest and Nina.

To explain how it had happened that these two were now alone with one another, it should be told that after Ernest had joined Nina and Lord Darcy, the three had rambled on together for a short while. She had already endeavoured in vain to rejoin her own party ; indeed, she felt that her father perhaps designedly avoided their meeting, that Lord Darcy might have opportunity undisturbed of conversing with her on the subject he had lately spoken upon with Sir William, and which was one of high interest and anxiety to the ambitious baronet.

She had, however, during her walk with him, knowing what she might expect, so dexterously managed the conversation as to turn it always more and more in a direction contrary to that to which her companion intended it to lead ; and the procrastinating and too confident suitor found, when Ernest interrupted their dialogue, that he had thrown away a favourable opportunity, and must now wait till another should present itself. Thus, each restrained by a certain feeling of reserve and of being ill at ease, the three strolled on together, till they came up with a party of gentlemen who were amusing themselves with the pursuit of an otter, and who called loudly on Lord Darcy to join in their sport. He did not long hesitate obeying a summons which was

so in accordance with his tastes; and Nina now found herself listening to the animated and intelligent conversation of the happy Ernest; and being conducted by him away from the company which was uncongenial to both, into the wood and up the shore, through shady walks and over tempting rising grounds, then back again, where the voice of the rushing waters invited them with its deliciously refreshing sound, till they found themselves at the summit of the cascade. They knew not that Antony lay there beneath the trees whose branches stretched forth above their heads; indeed, they seemed too occupied with their own conversation to remark any surrounding objects.

• Antony saw and understood all. He would have started from his lair, fearful lest the discovery of his presence, when they had believed themselves alone, might afterwards give them pain; but he read in the eager deportment and countenance of Ernest, that this was not the time for distracting the attention of Nina from his words by his own sudden appearance. So the deaf friend lay still and breathless.

Yes! Ernest had been carried beyond himself—beyond what he had intended. He had unexpectedly found himself unable longer to restrain his impatient vehemence. He had confessed all to Nina! In vain she had endeavoured in her surprise and confusion to stay the torrent of his words; on they had rushed unresistingly, laying open before her the full tide of

his devotion, and then followed the great question, and then a pause, when Nina, trembling from head to foot—overcome by her dismay and grief—faltered forth those words, those few words, that fell like molten lead upon the ears of Ernest, and seemed to send the whole ocean of his passion recoiling with terrible force upon his heart.

His lip quivered, and his strong frame shook. Did he hear aright? was it a dream? or was it not the sound of the water that had changed the accents of her low and tremulous voice?

He caught her hand, looking with doubt and eager inquiry into the agitated face. He could not speak, but she understood his hesitation. Must he so soon despair? And then how intently, how breathlessly he watched and listened to every word articulated in those tones; the first of which were the most melodious music to him, when she told him she was grateful, and would ever be so, for his words; that she was honoured by his regard—that she bore for him the highest esteem—that she gave him her friendship, and that it was pain to her to beseech him to withdraw the devotion he had proffered her, as that which he had asked of her was irretrievably given.

Then Ernest, half wild, gave utterance to burning words, which his impulsive nature had no power to restrain, when suddenly approaching voices were heard from the wood, and Clara's laugh rang merrily behind them.

The unhappy Ernest caught her hand again, and covered it with passionate kisses—told her he would leave her never to see her more—bade her adieu—said that he prayed Heaven she might never despise the man she had stooped to wed, or regret the life that ambition had induced her to select, or the misery she had worked upon himself; and then he fled away—fled wildly, swiftly towards the rock—the dark overhanging rock;—he rushed on, and sprang from it.

Ah! that scream. It was Nina's, as she ran forwards.

Did he not plunge into the waters?

CHAPTER VI.

LOST! LOST! LOST!

ANTONY sprang from his lair, and rushed to Nina's side. She was terrified, and gasping for breath, unable to move a limb, fearing to look into the gulf below.

"He is safe, Nina! he is safe!" said Antony. Those were merciful words, for she was suffering a cruel dread. Hardly could she believe them, and looked inquiringly and in wonder.

"Yes, he is safe! he leaped with one bound across the chasm! See, he has passed over the rock beyond, and is flying like a wild horse into the forest. There—there—now he is lost to view."

"Thank Heaven!"

At this moment she was again startled by the voices of the approaching company. He understood her gestures; and taking her arm in his, and bidding her lean on him—for the traces of her agitation could not yet be concealed—he led her into a

winding path, opposite to that one which she indicated as that whence the voices proceeded, and she thus obtained time to collect herself before she rejoined the party.

* * * *

What merriment there was in the wild wood that evening, beneath the green roof of boughs. How lightly sped the young feet over the moss in cheerful dance; how joyously the laughs of the happy ones rang above the deep tones of the waterfall. And when the young ladies of the company sang, how pleasantly their voices rose in mellow sounds among the branches, startling and silencing the usual songsters of the forest. But Nina sang not. Lord Darcy, her father, no one could persuade her to sing, or even to join in the dance. She pleaded fatigue, and sat like Antony, silent and sad, amidst the general merriment. No wonder Nina was sad. May it not have been the first time in her life that she was conscious of having caused severe pain to another? Antony had distinctly understood, from what he had witnessed, that his friend's hope was now destroyed. It must surely be so, he thought, or what else could have sent Ernest, as in a fit of the wildest madness, to encounter an imminent peril. All was, however, unaccountable to Antony; for could it be possible that Lord Darcy had that day obtained Nina's assent to his proposals, and yet that she could now so evidently avoid him, proving even in her quiet and

graceful amiability, by her restrained manner, to the quick and vigilant eye of Antony, that his companionship was unpleasing to her.

But now, at length, the late hour brought on a black curtain across the sky, and the turfy paths, by which the revellers made their way out of the wood to the roadside where their carriages awaited them, were wet with dew, and spangled by the "glow worm golden,"* that wandered brilliantly over the dark earth, as stars dropped from the glittering firmament, like gold dust upon the cheerless globe.

There had been many expressions of surprise that Ernest Forsythe had not rejoined the company for the dance, and no one could explain the cause. Antony had sought him in vain, and waited with his sister till long after the other families had driven homewards, but no Ernest appeared, and as it seemed useless to wait and watch and seek for him on through the night, Antony at length drove Kathleen to Ponterry, and imagining that Ernest might have wandered homewards, went to the T—— vicarage, and consigned the vehicle and horses to their stable.

Ernest, however, was not there, nor had he been seen since the morning, and Antony walked slowly and watchfully home in the dim starlight, but met with no traces of the lost one. He sat up long in his little chamber, looking constantly out on the paths below, expecting he might pass that way on

* Shelley.

his return, till weary with useless disappointments, he went to bed, though unable to sleep. He thought with anguish on the probable state of his friend's mind at that moment. The expression of his face, the fire of his eye, the look of desperation, the altered lips curled by the bitterness of disappointment—all that Antony had marked in him, as he tore himself from Nina, still haunted the mind of the deaf friend. And at dawn he rose and set forth to the vicarage, but Ernest had not appeared there, and Antony, remembering the feeling of longing with which the mountains had inspired him on the previous day, as well as in many a former desolate hour, resolved to start for an expedition into the hilly region, with which he had made himself well acquainted in his wanderings, and where he feared his friend might have lost his way.

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Ernest had been urged to his sudden flight from the side of Nina, not so much by his own impulsive emotions, as by the startling sounds of the approaching company, whose presence at such a moment would have been unbearable to him. He knew not which way to turn so as to avoid them, and, nerved by his own powerful excitement, had dashed forwards regardless of danger, and sprung across the chasm. He had then proceeded swiftly through the sheltering foliage, up to the stony acclivities that hung above the forest, whence, as he stopped and looked down-

wards, he could—himself unobserved—perceive here and there the gay dresses of the distant company, as they moved in groups along the rocky shore of the river. He stood, moodily looking on them for some time, scarcely conscious of what he saw or indeed of what he felt, for his whole inward being was as if stunned by a sudden crushing blow. He had fled from his companions in an impatient impulse, but he would rather, if possible, have fled from himself.

There are times when the mind that is utterly miserable, finds solitude so painful to bear, that it longs even for the society of others, that excitement and distraction of thought may help to deafen it to the inward voice of its own suffering.

And thus it was with Ernest, as presently, weary of the silence around him, he began to retrace his steps downwards towards the merry voices of the distant company.

Suddenly, however, he discerned the figure of Lord Darcy emerge from beneath the beech boughs upon an open green sward, and join a party of ladies.

The sight of this man staid his footsteps, as it aroused within him a storm of passionate feeling which he did not even strive to quell. To have found himself face to face with his triumphant rival, would have been unendurable, and he felt he could not answer for his own self-command.

“Away, away from them all!” he thought, as he

quickly turned and hurried from the forest, and walked away—away, he knew not and cared not whither. He looked up towards the purple hills that invitingly rose before him, and drawn onward by a silent fascination in their beauty, of which he was hardly conscious, he wandered towards them, on through brake and bush, on and on far from the forest, up the hill and along the moor, frightening the shy pewits from their low nests in the turf by his sudden appearance in their desert wilds; on with unwavering step from one hill brow to another, up towards the lofty ascent of the huge “Black Mountain,” which, from its precipitous sides, looks over a vast valley, containing yet many other lesser hills and vales. His aim or goal is in fact undefined to him, but he looks forward, and dashes forward, and looks up, and climbs untiringly. The sun is not yet near its setting, and its unclouded beams make all objects unusually distinct, and Ernest’s eager eyes appear to rest on them; but in truth his mind sees nothing without, here. It is busy only within with its own wild, rushing, unrestrained thoughts, and it is they, lashed into a hurricane by the madness of a disappointment, as startling as it was grievous, that now sweep in an angry blast across his spirit, and wing his feet as with the talaria of the messenger-god.

Ernest was not accustomed to misfortune, therefore he had not yet learned to master the passions it

awakened; therefore, also, he suffered from them the more intensely. The fairest hopes his heart had ever built—and they had been forming during years—were suddenly destroyed. Such a fact, he could hardly yet believe; now and then it started up before him with glaring reality, then he dashed it from his mind, and strove to fancy it was a dream; but all was bewilderment, and he could not arrange his fancies. Now he traverses those wild waste regions of uncultivated ground, sloping up towards the shoulder of the mountain. Now he sees hills, over which he has passed, lying beneath him with altered shapes, which he could hardly recognise did he stay to think of them. But he proceeds; no longer quite so speedily, but still with a mechanical motion, unconsciously obedient to the subsiding or re-awakening of the storm within. Now he has reached the level tracts where the deceptive marsh spreads itself out; on which those who tread, in ignorance of their danger, may sink deep into the devouring earth. He perceives not the friendly warners of this peril—the waving reed, and the purple cotton flower, nor its white woolly fleece, dotted here and there, marking out the treacherous ground. Now the sun is set, and Will-o'-the-wisp begins his spectre dances, and we can see Ernest no more, for there is no moon to-night; only stars, and they are dimmed by the rising vapours.

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The next day brought to Nina the same alarm which Antony had already experienced during many hours ; for the rumour of the sudden disappearance of the young Mr. Forsythe reached Llanawr Park. But the alarm was the more painful to her, since it was fraught with the melancholy suspicion, that she might have been the cause of some danger to Ernest. Her interest in the report, and her distress, could not be concealed ; and to her anxious mother, the tale of his love, and of her rejection of it, (though not the cause and plea of that rejection,) was now told ; accounting to Lady Allingworth, in some degree, for the evident agitation of her daughter on the preceding day. To her, as well as to Sir William, this intelligence was greatly welcome, inasmuch as it seemed to give promise of Nina's at length acceding to their earnest wish, and favourably receiving the proposals of Lord Darcy, concerning which she had surprised them, by expressing regret and annoyance, instead of that ready compliance which they had expected. She had assured her father, she felt it would be impossible for her to become reconciled to a union with one so unsuited to her. And he, in return, had urged the eligibility of such a marriage, and its great advantages in regard to rank and fortune ; had spoken of the long-standing friendship that had existed between Lord Darcy and their own family ; of the attachment for herself, which he had now declared ; and he reminded her,

also, of that great sense of obligation which she must ever feel towards the young nobleman, who had, on one occasion, rescued her by his own arm from an imminent danger,—thus laying upon her a debt towards him, which could, in no other way than this, be so gracefully and entirely discharged.

Nina had then ventured to express some doubt with regard to the nature of the policy which had urged Lord Darcy to the proposal of this marriage, suggesting that a consideration of its suitability and convenience might have led him to it, rather than real depth of attachment towards herself; and she added, alluding to the adventure at the stepping-stones during the tempest, which occurred full a year ago, that she had always considered the favour he then conferred on her only as a gallantry, which, under the circumstances, he could hardly have avoided paying to any other, in such a position, as readily as to herself.

Sir William, unhesitatingly, threw aside such views, as altogether mistaken; and advising her to endeavour to bring herself to look upon the matter in the aspect in which he had presented it, promised her leisure for further consideration before anything should be finally arranged. While, therefore, he was disappointed to find Lord Darcy had not improved his opportunity of pleading his own cause, on the day of the pic-nic, Sir William was highly gratified to be assured, that Ernest Forsythe did not stand in the way of his titled rival.

Nina had not dared to confess to her parents, the secret of her being unable to bestow on either of these that which they both desired. She had confessed to Ernest, in her desire to lessen the severity of the wound she gave, that which she could betray to none else—that she loved another in her heart!

Nina had, in fact, been long aware of her father's wish for the proposed marriage, though it had only now been openly acknowledged by him to her; and in accordance with what she believed he desired, she had long forced herself to seek pleasure in the society of the young nobleman, and accustom herself to bear with much that was distasteful to her; receiving also favours and compliments from him, of which she was becoming each day more impatient; but their endeavours to reconcile herself to the thought of such a union had been utterly vain, and she had become entirely convinced that Lord Darcy was one with whom she could have no sympathies, and whom she could never love.

It was not till Nina Allingworth had found the question of her marriage so decidedly brought before her, that she had examined herself with regard to her own feelings, but then the truth flashed upon her; she felt and understood that she could not, would not, must not, become the wife of Lord Darcy. Another name than his was written in her heart—another image hovered constantly in her

mind—another countenance, with its deep, dark eyes, seemed ever looking earnestly into her soul.

Ah! dear and wonderful childhood! how powerfully do thine imperishable influences affect every thought, and act, and fatality of our future life! When we are children we long for our manhood, and when it arrives no impressions are so deeply engraven, no affections are so sacred to us, as those which belong to childhood. Such of our fellow-beings as then interested us, or whom we then loved, are now in a peculiar manner endeared to us, and there is then a poetry in the first development of our attachments which clings to them through all the prose realities of the future!

Thus it was that Nina now found her early friendliness for her boy-companion—the poor deaf and dumb Antony Nayton—had grown insensibly into an unalterable attachment. The being called upon to devote her life and her affection to another, had opened her eyes to the fact that she could love no one as she loved him; and yet it was against her own will that she recognised this in her mind—for how could she become the wife of Antony? She knew that the idea could not for an instant be entertained by her father—that to her mother it would be heartrending—that were they acquainted with the nature of her feelings she would never be forgiven. She strove, therefore, to quell it—strove to believe that it was only a fancy which could and must be

chased away. Even the gay season she had recently passed in London, where she had been introduced into the most enlivening scenes, where she had passed through a whirl of amusements, taking her place in the higher paths of society, being everywhere received with honour, and receiving admiration from all, though it seemed that every day must increase more and more the distance which lay between her and the afflicted Antony Nayton, yet all this had not served to destroy the springing warmth of feeling towards him which was yet hardly recognised in herself. At the same time, the pride and vanity of the world of fashion was becoming unbearable to her. The young men in whose society she was thrown impressed her with a feeling of disappointment. She had expected to find scattered in profusion through the world which now opened before her young mind, those qualities she had known and loved in her boy-companion; that manliness, generosity, warm kindness of heart, or that refinement of intelligence, or, above all else, that truthfulness and love of truth, which were familiar to her in the character of Antony; but instead of these the young men who crowded round her, presented a strange contrast to that for which she had prepared herself—she found a surprising triviality in the most part, which was in some combined with love of self and undisguised conceit, in others, with a fearful idolatry of the follies and vanities of life; and where she

indeed met with intellectual characters, the beautiful ornament of *truth* was in general still wanting.

No wonder, then, that she looked forward to the time when, resuming her happy country life, she should also be able to resume the happy companionship of her former playmate. Before her return, however, to Llanawr, she had been alarmed by discovering the hopes her father entertained with regard to Lord Darcy; and it was then with but a heavy heart she contemplated the coming meeting with her old friend. On her return to Ponterry, she had found Antony improved in person and manners, and heard from all around her, even in her own home, expressions of respect and esteem for him, proving that he was, with all, a favourite, and justifying and confirming the admiration which he had long excited in herself. Still, however, constantly and untiringly Nina endeavoured to conquer that within her which she knew could bring only suffering and sorrow; struggling, at the same time, to conceal it from all around her as much as from Antony himself; and in every way she sought to excite and occupy her mind in order thus to smother the burning grief that lurked within her heart.

For the gentle Kathleen she felt a sister's tenderness, and often found a relief for her restrained feelings in yielding to strong impulses of kindness and affection to the sister of Antony. For his sake she had sought a nearer acquaintance with his friend—

thus unwittingly feeding those hopes in Ernest Forsythe which she was unconscious of having ever excited. The scene with Ernest at the waterfall, and the consciousness of having given pain to so good and generous a heart, now caused her the severest anguish. The feeling of painful uncertainty, also, and of suspense which oppressed her as the long day went wearily by and no news reached her of his return, or of his wanderings having been traced, could not be chased from her mind. Evening drew on, but still came no intelligence to relieve her anxiety, which she was indeed doomed to endure all through the long night and ensuing morning.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATIONS FOR A WEDDING!

"So the day is fixed for the first of September, Mrs. Evans?" said Kathleen; "the very morning that Antony and I must leave Ponterry."

"Nay, sure, my young lady and Master Antony *must* stop for the wedding. I know that the kind gentleman will put off the journey, to see my Gladis and Howel brought together, at last, for good and all."

"Indeed, Mrs. Evans, it would give us sincere pleasure, but Antony has a long, long way to travel, and he must be in London before the evening of the second. I feel, too, that my continuing to be your lodger at such a time, must in fact be inconvenient to you, though you and Gladis are too obliging to mention it."

"Never, never think of such a thing, Miss Nayton; indeed, sure, havn't Gladis and Howel said to me,

many and many a time, 'Now, there's Master Antony, he is the very first friend we twain had together, and dearly we shall always love him !' those were the very words as they said, only in Welsh, you know, miss ; and then isn't it a true happiness to us, to do any little thing for his own dear sister ? such a kind sweet young lady, too !" and Mrs. Evans bobbed a curtsy, in compliment to Kathleen.

"You are all goodness to me, and have made my life here very happy, Mrs. Evans, and I thank you, sincerely," said Kathleen, in her simple, earnest way.

"Bless the dear young heart, and who could help loving her ! and then that nurse, miss, who comes with you, what a nice woman she is ! Well, sure, how much she and I have talked together of her young lady and Master Antony. Dear, dear, who would have thought of the poor silent lad, that I remember, years ago, coming on mornings to the school, bringing Gladis flowers, and looking on at the little scholars ; who would have thought he could have ever given us all cause to owe him so much, and to love him so well. What ! the wedding come off without him ? No, indeed, Miss Nayton, we must pray him and you to stay for it."

"We shall think of you all, as we journey along, and wish every good and friendly wish for the new couple," said Kathleen.

"Well, sure, and there's no moving you, and I must leave it to Gladis to try to persuade ye both.

She was ever a cleverer hand with Master Antony than I, and perhaps she is the same with you too, young lady."

"And where is Gladis?"

"Why, she is only run up to the Park, for five minutes, to pray Miss Allingworth so to honour us, as to remember the word she gave Gladis, that she would come down to see the staffell, when all was ready."

Kathleen had by this time learned that the trousseau and dowry of an English lady is all comprehended in the word *staffell*, with the Welsh peasant, and consists of articles for the household, instead of money, the bridegroom expecting it shall bring him a handsome supply of crockery, tables, chairs,—and, in short, furniture of various kinds, necessary for their little establishment.

"And is it all ready now?" asked Kathleen. "I, too, am anxious to see it. You will exhibit it to me, as well as to Miss Allingworth, will you not?"

"Yes, sure—yes, sure, and it must all go off to-day, by the carrier, to Merthyr, for Philips to put all in order, ready to receive the bride. But first the young ladies must see it, and then there are just a few of our friends and neighbours down in the village, that would not take it kind not to be called in, you know, miss,—and a prettier staffell no young woman in all the county ever had to show," said Mrs. Evans, chuckling with pride and pleasure. "It is

seldom a village bride has so many and so kind friends, as our Gladis. What with your honoured brother," and here Mrs. Evans gave another curtsy, "and what with yourself, honoured young lady," and she bobbed again, "and what with Miss Allingworth, and other members of her family, and the kindness of all, Gladis and Howel are a fortunate couple after all; though, miss, I did think, sure, on that night when Gladis told me,—years ago, now, miss,—of the young man's proposals, that it was a foolish business, and such as her poor father would little have liked,—for his family was as old as the hills, Miss Nayton; yes, indeed, and for a poor labourer to marry my husband's daughter and mine, seemed a sad fall, you know, miss."

"But he is more, much more, than a poor labourer, now, Mrs. Evans, and Gladis could not find a better man," interposed Kathleen, cheerfully.

"But then you know, miss, there was plenty of others she might have had, without the waiting; there was Williams, the——"

"Of course. Yes, yes, we don't doubt that Gladis could have had a richer husband, but not a better-hearted. How comfortable he has made his parents, Mrs. Evans, giving them that neat warm cottage, and the little servant to attend on them."

"Yes, sure; aye, sure," but here Mrs. Evans was interrupted, or the talk might, as Kathleen well knew, have lasted an hour longer. Gladis had

returned, and brought word that Miss Allingworth, and a party of visitors at the Park, would call before noon, to see the staffell, and Mrs. Evans hastened away to the occupation which she greatly loved,—of presiding over her daughter's assembled property; indeed, she was now never so happy as when handling the various articles, dusting, rubbing, or arranging them, which she did, over and over again, several times during the day.

She was thus employed for the fourth time that morning, when the company from the Park, with Nina Allingworth and her sisters, arrived, and were conducted by Gladis up the narrow little staircase, to the rooms above, which were both filled with the display of property, so as to have the joint effect of a china warehouse and an upholsterer's shop.

Then Gladis, who was blushing so that she hardly knew which way to look, slipped away again, and Kathleen appeared, and soon found her hand kindly taken and detained by Nina's.

The little exhibition was amusing indeed. What a variety of chairs! of what a variety of shapes they were—they having been procured at different periods, during the life of the present owner, according as she had means and opportunity. What numberless jugs, and dishes, and waiters, and what a row of cups, in which that one with the gilt handle, and the name Gladis, marked in gilt letters, on the side, “the very one which, sure, her poor father gave her,

when she was a thing of four years," as Mrs. Evans assured them, was predominant. What saucepans, and what brass candlesticks; then what a pretty curtained-bed, piled with mattresses and pillows; and what a box full of pretty clothes, only a few of which were displayed by the proud little mother, but it was evident there was a good supply of gowns, and short three-cornered shawls, and of those dark-striped flannel petticoats which are usually the most exposed part of the dress, since the upper gown must be looped up in festoons over it, to perfect the costume. Here, too, is the cap which will be worn beneath that high-crowned, black-shining, beaver-hat, with its white satin strings, at the wedding; and what a cap it is, with its broad-lace borders, and large bows of white.

Nurse was there admiring all, but nodding silently and with especial satisfaction at the pretty china tea service which had been Kathleen's present.

Mrs. Evans could not resist hinting to the spectators, that "the bride owned, sure, some few other bits of furniture, which might have added to the handsome appearance," but she forbore to explain herself further; for she alluded to those which had been the present of Antony Nayton, when in their distress they had first established themselves in this cottage, and the mother had turned landlady; and though the good Mrs. Evans had vehemently wished

to be able to add these to the staffell, she had, in delicacy to her lodger, whose rooms they adorned, resisted the temptation, and their appropriation was postponed for the present.

The whole was a pretty sight, and an interesting one also to those of the party that were acquainted with the young couple, whose long and trying betrothal was at length to terminate thus prosperously.

As the company left the room Gladis was found standing outside the door, her eyes filled with tears, but smiles upon her lips, her hand rested in one of Howel's, as he stood beside her, his other arm round her waist, while he whispered kind and happy words. He had just arrived from Merthyr, to accompany back the precious staffell to the future home. As Nina passed out, the two bent forwards and spoke in low but fervent tones.

"Thanks, hearty thanks, Miss Allingworth, for all you have done for us!" And Howel added, with a slight hesitation, and dropping his voice, "I have tried to fill, to the best of my ability, the honourable position you, my lady, were at the trouble of getting for me. My humble thanks for so great a favour! God bless you, my lady!"

Nina bowed gently with a glance of cordial pleasure, and spoke a few quick words of her gratification at their happiness. Then, as the visitors passed down the stairs, Kathleen was earnest in endeavour-

ing to detain Nina, and requesting her to remain with her for a few hours.

"Think how soon I must quit Ponterry," she pleaded; "and how improbable it is that we shall meet again."

Clara, who was a little in advance, caught Kathleen's words, and turned quickly round.

"Yes, yes, Nina must indeed remain with you," she cried; "she has a little business to speak about with you. Come, Adelaide, we will leave the two together to talk it over, and arrange matters."

Kathleen saw with pleasure that Nina shared her own wish. They were left together, and Kathleen led her joyfully to her own little parlour, and removed the mantilla from her shoulders, and the bonnet from her graceful head, thanking her all the while for the sweet pleasure she gave by visiting her little home.

Nina embraced her tenderly.

"Dear Kate, it will not be your home long now."

"Alas, no!" and the tears sprang to Kate's eyes.

"But the business I have to arrange, of which Clara spoke, is, that you shall make Llanawr your home for as long a time as you can give. Mama sends you this message of invitation, and we all join urgently in the request."

"Oh, how kind! how beautiful! But I cannot—I must not—my aunts——"

"Kathleen, have pity on me!" interrupted Nina,

with an expression of sorrowful earnestness which surprised her companion. "Write to your aunts; plead for me—do not leave me yet."

"Dear Nina, and can *you* indeed wish it?" asked the bashful Kathleen, who believed it could be only for her own pleasure this proposal was kindly made.

Nina bent down her head. "I am sincere. Let me not be forced to part with *both* my dear friends at the same time. Your brother must leave us, but you—remain with me a little while. And now," she added, looking eagerly up, "tell me—have you heard of Ernest Forsythe?"

"Yes."

"Where—how?"

* * * *

The Donought family were not yet stirring, when Antony, the morning after the picnic, had returned from his early walk to T——, whither he had been to inquire, but in vain, for his friend. He, therefore, left a note for his tutor, apologising for his departure, and explaining the cause, adding, that he hoped to return shortly.

As he passed his sister's dwelling, he did not omit to call in for a moment, to inform her of his intended expedition, and was then detained by the loving, thoughtful little Kate, who would not permit him to leave her without partaking of a good breakfast, which he had altogether forgotten was a somewhat

needful commencement for the day. Then this reminded him how welcome might be some refreshment to Ernest, should he, as he suspected, have passed the night among the hills. So providing himself with a small bottle of wine, he sallied forth towards the forest, determined not to give up the search for Ernest until it had proved successful. As he went by the baker's shop of the village, the shutters were being taken down, and the freshly baked loaves, and large, round, tempting sailor's biscuits were being laid in the window. He had found the latter frequently supply him with a grateful meal in his long rambles, and he now turned in, and possessed himself of a bag full, which he stowed into his pockets, and started forward again on his road.

"So," thought Antony, "what with the substantial biscuits and the little flask of wine, Ernest and I, if we only find each other out, may enjoy a pleasant repast together."

The fine morning air, as he made his way up the hills, gave him vigour and hilarity, and even, in part, chased from his mind the gloomy shadow of his late fears. The beauty of the scenes in which he found himself, could not but impart their cheering influence to his inmost being. The variety, also of the forms around him, the changing shapes of the very mountains before, or the valleys behind him, served to enliven his spirits; and though he had traversed these regions so frequently that they were well known to

him, yet they seemed to present themselves to him now with a charming novelty. Moors and meadows, both far and near, were dressed in their richest hues, that varied continually as the clouds floated above them.

Who has not known the delicious influence on the spirits of an early morning, with its balmy airs, its glittering dews, and sunlight! Every plot of moss or of flowers was now gorgeously tinted, every bird and insect sprang around with cheerful elasticity, and to Antony, the whole was as a fairy land, the spell of which softened to his memory his own cares, as well as those of his friend; and he now even smiled at his late, perhaps, foolish anticipations of danger, for a Rambler in such regions of enchantment.

He had not yet quitted the well-frequented paths, and made inquiries of some of the passengers he chanced to meet from time to time, whether the gentleman he described had been observed in those parts. He was a little disappointed to discover by the gestures of the various listeners, either that the wanderer had not been seen by them, or that his English words were incomprehensible to them; but he was not discouraged.

"Patience, patience!" said Antony, in his mind.

One man, however, a ploughman leading out his team towards the dark-soiled fields that chequer the hills of that country on all sides, showed Antony, as he addressed him, a quicker intelligence than any

of the others, and though his replies were unheard, yet the deaf Antony could understand by the nods and signs by which it was accompanied, that such a person had been seen the evening before, in the direction which the informant now pointed out, and which confirmed Antony's original supposition. He set forwards again, therefore, with renewed hope, and taking for his goal that purple-pointed mountain, the highest of all the range in this part of the county, which on one side plunges its precipitous walls into the vallies beneath—that mountain towards which we have already watched the steps of Ernest—Antony proceeded eagerly, sometimes running, sometimes walking, full of watchfulness and full of expectation.

He fancied he saw the figure of his friend in every dark object discernible in the distance, until his hasty approach revealed the disappointing reality. Then he expected it to start forward from behind every bush or rock he had to pass, hailing him suddenly, perhaps with the well-known grasp of the shoulder. Gradually, however, as morning went by, he became accustomed to the frequent disappointment of his expectations, and the sanguine tone of mind with which he had begun his journey wore itself out. He had now passed the cultivated land, had not for hours seen a human face, and had entered on those wild waste tracts of moor, where stone walls only mark out the divisions of property, and where the small Welsh sheep graze, in countless

numbers, on the heather and short dry grass, which is the only sign of vegetation in the district.

Now came on the burning power of the noon-day summer sun, which, from an unusually clear sky, struck vertically upon his head. Its fervor was oppressive in the extreme, as he crossed the little dells and basins dividing the mountain ranges; but up on the ridges, the cool and never-failing breeze gave him new vigour.

Then came the wild bogs, more luxuriant in vegetation, with tufts of lank reeds and bright green spots interspersed between the black patches of earth. Such tracts were difficult to traverse—and indeed only in some parts possible; and as his eye scanned them with a searching and eager glance, and an undefined dread filled his mind, he became more than ever acutely sensible of the utter desolation of the scenes in which he stood. Suddenly he started on discovering in the wet soil on which he trod, close before him, the impression of human feet. This sight caused him a thrill of momentary pleasure, succeeded by alarm, all which, however, vanished as he turned a thrown-up bank of turf, and saw a party of labourers working with spades at a short distance from one another; they were peat-diggers occupied in cutting up the black peat into square pieces, and laying it out in the sun to dry before taking it home to burn upon their own hearths. Antony had not recollected the proba-

bility of finding them here during the favourable heat of the sun, and the surprise was a joyful one. He proceeded from one to the other, making his inquiries known to them, as well as was possible, by signs and gestures, for he was aware that these rough mountaineers could have little knowledge of any language but their own. He found, however, that a few of his English words were understood, and as he watched them calling to one another, apparently repeating his inquiries, he rejoiced to observe a favourable result. He was made to understand that a gentleman had been seen. But when? The man pointed to the sun, then, to the eastern sky—it was, then, that morning. But where was he seen? They pointed out to him a ledge of the mountain, above the spot on which they stood. Expressing his thanks and pleasure at the intelligence, Antony resumed his way, crossed the marsh, and continued the ascent in the direction they had indicated.

But it would be wearying to trace his every wandering, so vain and fruitless, through that day. He had already greatly increased the usual distance to that point by deviating from the direct line leading to it, and had passed over a considerable number of miles, little knowing how many more lay before him.

On and on went the anxious Antony over the undulating mountains, on through the long, long day; but still in vain.

"Patience, patience," repeated Antony in his mind.

By the time that the declining sun reminded him the afternoon was closing in, he was weary, not only with his journey, but more with fruitless expectation and repeated disappointment.

The keen mountain air, too, had sharpened his appetite, and he became well-nigh exhausted, but resisted the inclination to have recourse to the little stock of provisions. They were for Ernest, and must remain untouched.

He had reached the table land, extending over the summit of the Black Mountain, where a heron hovered round him, with its broad, black wings. He had passed the lakes which lay glittering on it, and whose cold and delicious waters had considerably relieved his thirst; he now passed the wide, bleak area which for many months in the year is a sheet of snow, and found himself overlooking the shaggy declivity beyond. He called aloud the name of Ernest in a voice as powerful as he could command. He knew not how cruelly the wind had played with it, and mocked it, sweeping it into space as it might a feather. He descended the precipice a little way, observing that in among the shady nooks, turned northwards, which the sun never visited, long wreaths of snow still nestled. He stood upon the slanting turf, strewn with rocks, and called aloud the name of Ernest again and again, in a voice impelled by a feeling of desperation. The beautiful

expanse of a vast valley lay stretched before him, but he saw it not.

Suddenly, from behind a large stone that hung upon the sloping earth, as if a breath of wind or a child's touch might send it hurling down into the depths below,—though, in truth it was deeply set in the soil to which it seemed affixed only by the clinging and tender arms of moss and lichen,—suddenly from behind this, rose up, slowly, a human form. The setting sun's rays gleamed on the pale and haggard face, the mountain air waved the thick matted locks to and fro, a wild light flashed from the starting eyes—it stood as a spectre, confronting Antony.

Happy Antony ! he bounded over the rocky ground between it and him, sprang forwards and grasped the arm of Ernest.

“Thank Heaven ! I have found you, Ernest, dearest, dearest Ernest. I was in despair, but now —.”

It was indeed Ernest, but so altered during the past four-and-twenty hours, few friends but such as Antony could have recognised him. The delighted Antony clinging to him and gazing eagerly in his strange, bewildered countenance now spoke loving words, telling of all his alarm in his absence, of his joy at finding him once more, saying it seemed an eternity since he had lost him, while the other appeared at first hardly to recognise him, and then

strove to shake off his grasp with a careless indifference; but Antony's persuasive gentleness could not be resisted, and Ernest was presently seated beside him on the turf.

"Yes, we will just rest here a short while and then go towards home, will we not, Ernest?"

"Home!" cried Ernest, and burst into a wild laugh, "and what should I do there?"

Antony read the words on his lips; his senses were so keenly alive at this moment, and his intelligence so strained, for Ernest's strange manner had alarmed him, that he could have caught every word uttered by him now, however swiftly and incoherently.

Antony laughed also. "Why! what should you do anywhere else?"

Ernest struck him on the knee, still laughing. "And what in Heaven's name has brought you to this desert, old fellow?"

"A wish to join in your ramble."

"But my journey lies where you can't follow. There, there," and he moved his hand to and fro towards the valley below that extended itself out far, far in the eastern distance, and was now veiled in a delicate haze of azure.

"Nay, nay, Ernest, you must come home quickly. You have sadly frightened your poor father by this flight of yours."

"A botanical excursion," cried Ernest, pulling up

by the roots the small fern that grows in these regions in abundance, and thrusting it into his pocket.

"And does this botany of yours employ you by night as well as day, then?"

Ernest laughed again, and threw himself backwards on the heather. Antony could trace in this action what indeed he had recognised already in every movement—an extreme exhaustion, and thought he might perhaps have been lying thus almost incapable of thought or motion when aroused by his voice. He now kept his eyes upon his face.

"Go away, Antony; better go and leave me alone."

Antony bent down and stroked the hair back from the pallid face tenderly.

"What, leave you alone here, dear fellow?"

Ernest started up and thrust his hand away.

"You will not send me from you, Ernest; I have come so many miles to seek you."

"You spoke of my father, did you not? Tell him I will write to him shortly."

"No, no, you shall tell him so yourself," began Antony, cheerfully. "And now what would you say to a little breakfast? If I have only a biscuit or two with me, I guess you have found an appetite by this time," and he drew forth the biscuits. Ernest snatched them eagerly from him and devoured them hastily, while Antony continued speaking.

"Why, what a wild chase this is of yours, Ernest,

and all after botany too. So, for the sake of this precious botany, you have been half drowning yourself down there in the bog, as any one may tell from a sight of these clothes all covered with the wet, black earth. Come, now, confess ; you have been having a fine little adventure below there." Ernest laughed and nodded, muttering, " And a more serious kind of adventure than the good fellow thinks for."

" And then these hands, too, tell pretty tales of their master's enthusiastic scrambles in the cause of botany, so scratched, bleeding, and bruised. But what have I here in this pocket of mine—a flask of wine ?" and he drew it forth. Ernest sprung up, seizing the bottle, and applied it to his parched lips. Antony saw it soon drained to the bottom, and then flung down the cliffs dashing itself to a thousand pieces. Then he took the arm of Ernest and began relating to him his own adventures of the day, whilst he quietly led his companion away, and along the slope of the mountain leading downwards. They had gone thus for some way together when Ernest stopped.

" Where are we going ?"

" Homewards : it is a walk of some hours ; but I know a shorter way back by far than either you or I used in coming. Every rock and hillock is an old acquaintance of mine. I will be a sagacious guide."

" But, my father, was he really alarmed ?"

" Oh, yes, the poor good man could not sleep. His

anxious heart was with his Ernest all night, though he knew not where."

Ernest resumed the walk with goodwill; and they proceeded as before, Antony now silent, but watching gladly the return of reason and self-possession marked in the countenance of his companion, till of a sudden Ernest again stopped, and wrung heartily the hand of Antony. Then, with his old, well-known earnest look, he gazed into the deaf friend's face, and addressed him in his finger language.

"Dear, best friend, I have been unkind, ungrateful, a savage to you, but in my heart I thank you. If you had not roused me, I might have lain there for ever. Another night of cold and hunger, and the sun would perhaps have not found me alive. I have been a fool—I know it; but don't ask me what made me so mad—don't speak to me now, only try to forgive me, though I cannot forgive myself."

"Now, he is a man again," thought Antony. "Thank Heaven that Ernest is once more Ernest's self."

It had been long dark before they reached the high-road, and found a public-house, where they could procure refreshment; and here, the weary adventurers finding a vehicle to carry them forward on their journey, they were not long in making their way to Ponterry, where Antony stopped at Kate's lodgings only to allay her anxiety on their account,

and then proceeded with Ernest to the vicarage of T—.

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Antony waited in the parlour till the early morning twilight began to grow ruddy and glowing; but Ernest and his father were still closeted together in the little study; and Antony, in whose heart a voice of joy and gratitude had been resounding ever since he had refound his friend, that he had been rescued from perils which had well nigh brought destruction upon him, now began to ponder on all the dear friend had endured, with an aching heart.

He could not wonder at Ernest's wild and passionate recklessness at his grief, his almost madness, when he thought of the ruin, in that deeply-sensitive nature, of the hopes and longings it had fondly cherished. Antony cast himself on the sofa, weary with exertion and excitement, and gave himself up to the contemplation of his friend's sorrow. He could let the voice of friendship and sympathy cry aloud within his whole soul for the suffering of another, when he would not permit his inmost heart to utter one groan for its own pain.

"Alas! Ernest! that thou shouldst, in loving Nina so deeply and so truly, have loved in vain. I can suffer with thee, for have I not known the same?—but one pang I have been spared, which has pierced thee keenly. I have not the anguish of disappoint-

ment, for my love was ever without hope. But thou, Ernest, ah ! how manfully didst thou hope !” And then he pondered on the sufferings of that long evening and night, and weary, weary day ; of the terrible moment when Ernest had, as he had at length acknowledged to him, found himself sinking in the marsh in the darkness of the night, and believed that death was upon him, when, by so desperate a struggle, as one with such an awe upon his soul only can make, and by a circumstance which he deemed miraculous, he was enabled to drag himself from the peril, being aided even by the phosphoric lights hovering round, to discern those solid and firmly fixed objects, which might be seized or trodden on in safety. Then he thought on the cold-damp night which followed, the wanderer not daring to move, lest he should step into new dangers, till the dawn glowed to show him his desolate position, and to light him on over yet more dreary wastes ; and the tears of friendship flowed faster, as Antony represented to himself the burning anguish which from within had impelled the lonely one still to flee farther and farther from his fellows. Then the hunger and exhaustion which had wasted all the powers of mind and body ; then of the wearied one’s lying down to die.

And now, closing his eyes, his thoughts wandered again to the vision of the preceding day—the vision of the globe, round which, now, however, clouds

hung, obscuring from it the moon's smile of light, while the elements of land and water receded from one another, and left a dark blank between. He saw Ernest and Nina passing away from one another, yet looking mournfully, regretfully back, and as he contemplated the anguish marked in the countenance of his friend, a sigh burst from his lips, and tears rolled gently down the pallid cheek.

His waking dream thus disturbed, he raised his eyes.

Ernest was bending over him.

"You weep, dearest! Oh! wherefore?"

His look was so earnestly inquiring; and as Antony rose up, and dashed the dew-drops from his eyelids, and tried to smile the clouds away, Ernest was still so unsatisfied, so anxious, so eager, that he knew not how to evade the reply.

Broad daylight now streamed upon them from the newly-risen sun, and discovered Ernest altered since he had left the room; for he was now calm, appeared refreshed, though still pale, and with a heavy expression on the brow, which Antony had never before seen in him. His dress was changed, and set in order; and a travelling cap and cloak lay on the table. His quick blue eyes, though not sparkling with their wonted vivacity, glanced powerfully into those of his companion as he made him sit down with him, and began to speak with the fingers, which was frequently his custom when he wished his

meaning to be peculiarly distinct and forcible to Antony.

"You weep, dear friend; you have some sorrow. You wept even in your sleep. This sorrow is, then, heavy on your heart. Impart it to me."

Antony made no reply; but looked hesitatingly towards him.

"I am going away—to London—in a quarter of an hour; but I cannot leave you thus—in ignorance of your distress. Ah! I guess you hesitate to confide it to me, because I refused to explain to you my own;" but here he waved his hand to and fro, adding, "I cannot speak of it; impossible."

"It is unnecessary, dear Earnest. It is known to me. It is for your sorrow I have wept, and my griefs are yours—yours—my friend."

"What can you mean?"

"If you are, indeed, about to leave me, Ernest, it is but just I should confess to you, that your secret became accidentally revealed to me. That it is sacred—inviolable—as—as if my own life hung upon its concealment, I need hardly breathe to you." Antony had laid his hand upon his shoulder, and now dropping his head upon it, spoke some low words.

Ernest sprang up—seized his cap and cloak—and hastened to the window, turning his face towards it so that to his companion it was unseen; and for some minutes, Antony remained perplexed and

grieved, fearing he had excited the displeasure of him he loved.

At last, Ernest turned towards him, and grasping his hand with a passionate fervour, embraced him. hastily. Now, Antony perceived that tears glistened in his eyes; they were the first that his frozen heart had enabled him to shed.

He sat down by the table, and began to write; it seemed as if he dared not trust himself to speak otherwise at that moment.

“And you have wept for me! For those tears I owe you an eternal gratitude. Those hot tears springing from your own generous and noble heart, fell upon my soul with a healing influence. I rejoice that my secret is known to you, and that I am spared the revelation; I would have my whole heart open to you—the friend nearest to it. My follies are thus explained to you; excused they can only be, by your own liberality and love.”

Antony over-looked the hasty writing.

“But, dear Ernest, explain to me, at least, your sudden departure. You cannot have slept this night; you cannot have prepared your father for so hasty a farewell.”

“I have been in conversation with my father,—the best, and, by me, the most admired and honoured of men—ever since our return last night. May every word he has spoken have its full and beneficial effect on my future life! All is explained to him. And I

have made my resolve regarding my own course. He agrees to my departure, instantly, for London. He knows my temperament, and does not resist my desire to quit this neighbourhood without delay. To remain here another day, would be unbearable to me. I cannot breathe here. I shall devote myself now, entirely to my profession; and hasten back to Leyden, to my own friends and pursuits there, as soon as possible."

"Then, when I am in London, the great city will be a solitude for me. You will have left England."

"I will leave you my address in town. You will be there in a few days. Come to me. We must meet there. You may have news to bring me of Lady Darcy."

He dashed away the pen, with an ironical smile, as he wrote the last words, and rose up.

The servant entered to announce that the time the coach would start was at hand, and it was not long before Antony was waving his adieus to his friend, as he was borne away from those he warmly loved by the vehicle which was so soon to perform the same cruel office for Antony himself.

As he turned away his head, the kind, thoughtful, eyes of Mr. Forsythe met his, and the good man taking Antony's hand, with such an earnest expression of regard and tenderness as he had never before manifested to him, led him back into the house.

"I owe you my son, Antony; I owe you my son," he said, deeply affected, as he embraced him. Then he wrote; "I feel that but for your energetic exertion, he might never have returned to me. I am grateful to you. You are fortunate, my young friend, to have been early trained in the school of affliction; there do we learn the finest discipline, and become best fitted for whatever struggle may be before us; there we learn, too, moderation both in our joy and in our grief. God bless you now, and for ever!"

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The report of any unusual or unexpected circumstance, as it is borne along from ear to ear of the pleased public, by that many-winged zephyr, gossip, usually carries with it some assertion either founded on a truth, or entirely imaginary, of what is supposed to have been the origin of the event itself; thus, when the rumour of Ernest Forsythe's having suddenly quitted the county became spread through the neighbourhood, a mere suggestion, at first thrown out, that a summons from some titled relative in office might have occasioned his departure, was quickly spread as a certain and undeniable fact; and it was soon universally believed, that an express had come down, on the previous day, from Windsor, despatched by Sir Frederick Melville, communicating a proposal of too important a nature to be disregarded; that on this account Master Antony had summoned him back from a

scientific excursion in the mountains, and that he had immediately proceeded to London, to take upon him a Government appointment.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WHOLLY SENTIMENTAL CHAPTER.

"PLEASE, Jemima, are you a handsome sort of girl now, should you think?" asked little Nebat, the youngest Master Donought; of the eldest Miss Donought, as he found her before a looking-glass, endeavouring in vain by twisting and pulling to make her wiry hair fall in graceful curls on either side of her extensive countenance.

"You silly boy, to ask such a funny question! How should I know, Nebat?"

"Why I should think you must know, Jemima, since you so often look in the glass, now," said the boy, with a sly mischief-loving glance which was unseen by the young lady.

"Looking in the glass, indeed! I hardly ever do such a thing. Don't be impertinent, Nebat."

"Oh dear no, of course not; only I should so like to know if people *would* call you handsome or not;

for I have only heard one person's opinion, and he may not know much about such things."

"One person's opinion, indeed, about me!" was the rejoinder, with a certain toss of the dangling locks, that bespoke a touch of gratified vanity, while at the same time the speaker was all in an excitement of curiosity. "And I should like to know who would take the liberty of speaking on the matter to you."

"Would you like to know, Jemima? Ha, ha, ha! would you like to know his opinion?" laughed the boy, hursting out into an uproar of merriment and mischief. "Well then, I'll tell you. 'Why,' says he to me, 'who, in the world, Nebat, could call such a turn-up nose as she has, and such a yellow face, handsome?'"

The countenance of the offended beauty became crimson.

"And what are you then but a little, ugly, good-for-nothing monster? And who dared to put such insolent words into your mouth?" The infuriated eldest rushed forwards, seized the boy by the collar, and shook his small person as violently as if she were wringing a mop; while he continued roaring with laughter, and legs and arms struggled and kicked vehemently. She had dragged him to the door and thrust him out.

"And would you like to know who it was said it, Jemima?" began the boy again, who was still in high good-humour, and was too much

accustomed to this little proceeding on the part of his sister, to regard it as unpleasant. "What will you give me to tell you his name? Well then, it was *not* Master Antony, not Master Antony, only brother Bildad."

"What should I care who said it," was the reply, in a suddenly softened tone, as she shut the door upon him, and little Nebat ran down the stairs, laughing still, and crying aloud, "Only brother Bildad, brother Bildad!"

The striking beauty had now indeed occasion to have a consultation with her mirror, for the curls were sadly disarranged, and with angry hands the angry lady twisted and pulled the obstinate locks again and again, repeating, "The little insolent, the impertinent boy—but only brother Bildad, only Bildad, after all." This comforting word soon soothed the ruffled temper, and she gazed on the image before her with renewed interest and satisfaction.

"Brothers are no judges, that is certain. I don't see anything there that need be found fault with. I am sure the second Miss Powel's face is ten times more yellow than that, and her nose is a perfect snub." The young lady turned her profile to the mirror, straining the ocular nerves immensely as she forced her eyes into their left corners to glance askance at the interesting reflection. "A turn-up nose; what a falsehood! That is no more a turn-up than it is a potatoe."

And now Miss Donought sat down by the window

and looked forth with a pathetic sigh and a languid inclination of the head, along the street, towards the turnpike road. Her elbow was leant upon the window-sill, and her head bent upon her hand. Miss Donought looked melancholy and sentimental.

But for whom did she watch? For whose sake had she sat all that morning and the whole of the previous day beside that window, the short muslin blind tucked up on one side, so as not to impede her view, and she looking up from the yellow and green pocket-handkerchief she was hemming, whenever an individual of any description appeared upon the dusty road? Whom had she hoped there to recognise, but hoped in vain? For whose eyes had she arranged those drooping curls, with all the grace that paper and pincers could impart to them?

That a change has come over the spirit of Jemima Donought's dream, there can be no doubt. To use the favourite expression of our friend, Mrs. Evans, "Who would have thought it!" that the austere commander-in-chief of the nine brethren and of the poor pupil, could ever have worn, as now, that aspect of soft and languid sentimentality; that that heart, formerly as hard as cold sealing-wax, could have become warmed by any tender emotion, into a state capable of receiving impression?

See, she now rises from her seat, lets fall the half-hemmed pocket-handkerchief, hastens to the glass, takes one more Narcissean glance, and leaves the

room; she rushes down stairs, knocks down two children who had impeded her progress in the passage, and hurries to the front door. She opens it—yes, condescends with her own genteel hands to open it—and stands ready to welcome him who approaches.

And lo! it is Antony Nayton who turns into the gravel road—passes along by the flower borders, where the daffodils bloomed in the spring time, and advances towards her. Yes! and Antony—once the despised and cruelly treated child, over whom Jemima Donought had considered herself established by the laws of nature and society, as just tyrant and persecutor, this same Antony, no longer the un consequential but the handsome pupil, is elevated in her thoughts to a position of highest command and importance; for though many years younger than herself, he has become the hero round whom are entwined all the interest, sentimentality, and romance of which her passive imagination is capable.

As he approached the door-way, she stood, greeting him with repeated nods, which, though they well displayed the length of the dangling curls, did not improve their appearance; and so much did she resemble the Chinese wooden figures of nodding mandarins, with their small eyes and heads, that move unceasingly up and down, that Antony must have found some difficulty in repressing a smile, had he observed the action; but his attention was so

engaged by his own thoughts, that it was not till he was close upon her, that the interesting young lady was perceived by him. Then he thanked her for her civility; apologised for his protracted absence, expressed a hope he had not caused Mr. Donought any uneasiness, and entered the house. She, with some difficulty, obtained his attention while she explained, with numerous signs and gestures, how fearful had been the suspense *she* had suffered on his account, and how her anxiety had^l led her to expect he would have been borne home a corpse.

Indeed, Antony had latterly become endeared to the other members of the family also, and his absence had even occasioned in Mrs. Donought so much of uneasiness as was compatible with her usual disregard of any other human being but her ten or her husband. She was cutting out pinafores for six of the ten olive branches, when three or four of Nebat's playmates saluted Antony with shouts and india-rubber balls, and ran down to hop round him, calling out, "Mother, here is Master Antony at last; the eagles have not pecked his eyes out after all, or eaten him!" and she rose up, with the vast scissors in one hand, and the brown holland in the other, and actually moved out into the passage to nod a welcome to him. It is said, too, that the Reverend Bildad Donought shook hands with his pupil as he entered his study.

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It was late in the afternoon before Antony could escape from the parsonage to visit his sister.

He found her at her desk, at the point of beginning the important letter to her aunts which was to demand a prolonged leave of absence. She had delayed it till now, as she desired much to have her brother's judgment, and know his wishes before writing; but Nina had instigated her not to lose the mail, by waiting longer.

The proposition of Kathleen's visit to Llanawr Park was received by the delighted brother with joy and gratitude, and he penned some hasty but urgent lines to his aunts to accompany Kathleen's note, and press their consent.

It was a pleasant time then, when he sat down by the side of Nina, who was occupied with drawings, and told the adventures of the last two days, which, though fraught with anxiety and alarm during their occurrence, could now be related cheerfully, and in such a manner as to spare her much painful regret, which, had she known all, her gentle heart would have felt keenly.

On the table were scattered drawings and paintings, principally executed by Antony, and an open portfolio. Nina was busying herself in copying a sketch he had taken of his sister, and he sat by, looking over the several drawings, criticizing his own, and often beginning recklessly to tear them across, for the pleasure of having Nina plead for their

safety. Then, he brought out from its folds of silver paper, a little painting of Llanawr, that seemed well known to Nina.

"I have been careful of it, you see, Nina, as I shall always be; yes, as long as I shall live." He looked down at it, smiling. "How often, when I am in banishment, shall I look on this portrait of your and of my mother's home, and think of the happy days when you painted it for me."

"But your banishment is now over; you are at length free to leave the dull country of your exile, and you will soon find yourself in the midst of a busy amusing world, looking back, perhaps, with contempt on these days."

"No, no, Nina; they have been the happiest I shall ever know."

"May it not be ignorance of the amount of happiness of which your mind is capable, that makes you think thus?"

"I cannot conceive the possibility of my ever again finding a heart enjoyment, such as I have known in my youth here."

"And yet," she replied, cheerfully, "I foretell, Antony, that you will be a happy man. There is that around you, above, within you, which *must* preserve you from misery."

"Thank you! To look at these words—to feel that your thoughts are so beautiful for me, is a delicious rapture."

"When the tide of time, Antony, has rolled between you and your youthful days here, bearing along with it events, like vessels in full sail, then your mind will have so expanded, will have seen so much that is new and wonderful during its commerce with others, that you will look back to these shores with a dreamy apathy, and hardly remember how sweet were the flowers that grew on them, to you."

"No, Nina, I am not so shallow-hearted; my rambles with yourself in the island of childhood have been more beautiful to me, than even a glorious future could ever prove. But you forget the future can offer no promise for that commerce with men of which you speak. Consider how doubtful must be my prospects."

"And have you forgotten all that we have already said on this? how courageously we have thought together of your coming life—how daring were the projects we formed for you—how high we have ranked your powers—how energetic are to be your efforts to use them—how prosperous, how triumphant they are to become?"

"Yes, yes; but, Nina, these were only dreams of our child-minds; dreams too glowing and glorious ever to be realised on earth."

"Remember Schiller's beautiful words. '*Tell him, when he is a man, he must reverence the dreams of his youth.*' Ah! if men would only do this, how often

would they be saved; how often turned back from wrong, or urged forward to happiness!"

"The poet's words are beautiful indeed; but are not the dreams of our youth usually false?"

"No! they spring from a mind not yet darkened by contamination with the world; not yet learned in the lore of its temptations and sin; they spring from a pure mind looking through the pure medium of its own noble aspirations; looking towards the sun-bright mountain-point it longs to reach, ignorant as yet of the length and roughness of the way, and of the many ignoble resting-places that lie invitingly along the road to tempt travellers aside. The aspirations of such unprejudiced moments surely deserve to be revered!"

"They may be too high to be ever reached."

"Can a man's soul ever aspire too high?"

"Jean Paul says, you know, 'We climb the green mountains of life, only to die on the iceberg above!'"

"But in these words, it seems to me, he only warns of the disappointment following on a selfish and worldly ambition. Your ambition is, I think, of a very different nature, and such an one as every man needs to inspire him to honourable exertion."

"I wish, Nina, I could have more faith in it. I am frequently oppressed by a distressing doubt of being ever able to carry out the life-plan it has marked out for me."

"Of course our hopes and designs must all fit into

the mould Reason forms for them ; but the will, the will is a mighty force, which can bear us on through apparent impossibilities. I do not think Carlyle goes beyond truth when he says, one who possesses a fiery vehemence of will, owns the elements of a majestic character. ' Benevolent feelings, sublime ideas, and, above all, an overpowering will,' he places together as qualities which *together* must be triumphant. We should remember that, without the self-conviction that certainly what we *will* we *can do*, the will is not perfect."

Antony read and re-read the words she hastily penned, with an eager delight. They were, to his mind, written in letters of fire.

" These qualities shall be mine," he said ; " I will never again let this golden will faint within me. But self-confidence ; would that I could obtain this !"

" Hope, hope, Antony !"

" No !" He laid his hand upon hers, and shook his head pensively, adding, " I am deaf to her voice as to yours. A warrior must have valour and spirit for the battle, even where there is no hope of victory."

" Ah, Nina, now he is on this strange subject he will tell you of the most unheard-of ideas. Reason him out of them, I pray you. His maxims about this poor Hope, which is a dear friend of mine, are quite melancholy," said Kathleen, as she folded and sealed her letter, for she had heard Antony's last words.

Nina smiled and turned again to him.

"What is there but hope can wing the spirit with the strong confiding will, of which we have spoken?"

He shook his head again.

"Something stronger, truer, holier than hope, Nina! We will consider the matter from the beginning. Are there not frequently wishes lying deep in the heart, writhing there in their restrained passion, which it is our duty to silence, and which we dare not permit hope to rouse?"

Nina bowed her head in assent, and then quickly turned away her face, which had become suddenly pale.

Kathleen, however, murmured to her, "Poor fellow, he is thinking of his deafness; that can never be cured."

"In such cases, then," he continued, "you will allow that hope can be no aid?"

"We can hope that such desires may be subdued, quenched for us, by a Higher Power, or made beneficial to us," was Nina's reply.

"Pardon me, that would be faith rather than hope. The hope we are speaking of, remember, is not that divine sister of Faith and Love, who is commended to us by inspired words. The hope which urges a man on to seek fame or prosperity in the world, is part of that man's natural constitution; is a gift shared by the crime-stained robber, and the most

innocent child. It is altogether terrestrial. Its support fails us at our hour of need ; its promises are false !”

Kathleen caught up a slip of paper and wrote :—
“ All the world agree, dear Antony, that without hope life would be dark.”

Nina added, as she passed it on to Antony, “ Unless resignation cast a radiance on it.”

He turned quickly to her with a smile.

“ Nina, you are approaching nearer to my own train of thought. Shall I show you the motto of my life, that which is engraven on every page of the past, and is the index for the future ; that word is—Patience.”

Nina looked surprised.

“ Is not Hope more manly ?” said Kathleen.

“ What is manly, ought to be true—what is true must be holy. Hope is false—it is not then worthy of a man. Resignation is both beautiful and holy—it implies the pious calm of the soul that has no wish on this side of the grave ; but Patience is noble, cheerful, strong, and therefore manly—supports us through toil and difficulty : through pain, weariness, fear and doubt—keeps Despair out of sight, and holds ever before us some undefined expectation, the form of which we leave to be moulded by the hand of God, as it is the result not of our own desire, but of a calm reliance on His bounty.”

“ You are revealing to me beauties in this angel

figure that I have never recognised before," were Nina's words.

He drew from his pocket-book a sheet of paper, neatly folded, which he opened and laid before her.

"See, these lines are written by my mother's hand. I was a child when I first read, first loved and adopted them in my heart."

"And in that same pocket-book, Nina," said Kate, "you will find some verses of Antony's, which, though I cannot approve of, you must read."

Nina read the paper Antony offered.

"Patience, patience, child of toil and suffering. Time brings relief or rest. Patience—believe and act. Every man may rise above his calamity."

Kathleen, catching from the pocket-book another paper, laid before Nina these few verses, wrung from the deep sorrows of Antony's own hopeless love.

"Hope, the fair goddess of this world of pain,
I do not seek, I do not long to know;
For I have learnt her kindest smile is vain,
She hath no balm to heal the wound of woe.
'Tis true, th' enchantress hath a soothing power,
Which, like a sun, doth gild life's future wave;
But, when that wave is reached, dark storms may lower,
And she, who could beguile us, cannot save.

"Trust not her flattering voice, it is untrue,
Her flowers when plucked, e'en by the little child,
Are cold and wet with disappointment's dew,
And men die wretched on whom once she smiled.

Hast thou not marked the youth and maiden gay,
Trip dancing into life with gladsome hearts?
Hope leads them on, then, faithless, flees away,
And joy, with her, from each young soul departs.

"Of pride, the friend—ambition's star and guide,
The good, the bad, doth hope alike beguile;
And all the throng of men, in one vast tide,
Roll on, obedient to her lunar smile.
On to the longed-for shore they rush; but there
Some hidden rock, from which recoil is vain,
They meet, then break and burst in wild despair,
And hearts thus shattered cannot rise again!

"Who then dare trust upon this child of earth?
No power hath she despairing tears to stay;
No fellowship with Hope of Heavenly birth,
Who beckons us to Truth's eternal day.
She, angel-sister of bright Faith and Love,
Speaks to the soul of Joy that fadeth not,
Of prayers accepted, comfort from above,
Of longings satisfied, regrets forgot.

"Oh! Hope Divine, who hovering mid-air,
'Twixt earth and sky, dost point aloft to Heaven;
Oh! till, released, we, hither may repair,
Let thine ambassadress to man be given.
Send us meek Patience, with her upward gaze
Fixed on thyself, her brow serene and high;
Patience shall bear me o'er life's weary ways,
To realms where Hope becomes reality!"

"And yet, dear Antony, is it very wrong of me,"
began Kathleen, "I cannot help loving best that
dear, kind Hope. It seems as if without a hope,
though I hardly know of what, I could not live."

"Hope on, sweet child! hope, hope if thou canst,
till the end of time. Why should I take from you,
dearest, the staff which is strong enough to support

you, because under me it would break. Every pilgrim's staff need not be of the same wood, or of the same strength."

He took the pen, now, eager to explain entirely to the attentive Nina the subject that engaged their thoughts, and yet anxious that Kathleen should no longer be disturbed by it.

"It seems to me that this Hope is a kind of mental weakness, which is born with us: one of the infirmities of man's nature; that it is to the mind what fever or rather false excitement is to the body, animating us with a capability of doing what otherwise our weariness would render impossible to us, and thus being frequently of important service by inspiring us to exertion, but that it is not true health or true power."

"You think, then, Antony, where little minds need hope, great minds are nerved by patience."

"You have understood me! For this patience is the offspring of faith and the genius of all effort."

"And you have almost made me a convert to your unusual opinions. Of course you still allow Faith the foremost rank of all?"

"Her right to reign above all is not here questioned! But, one more argument. Hope sets before us, as an aim, a desire of our own hearts. Patience bids us await the fulfilment of our destiny. Faith is compatible with both; and these two latter, but not the former, are, I consider, comprehended in

Jeremy Taylor's golden words, 'Hope confidently, wait patiently, and thou shalt find thy prayers have been heard.'"

"You have made Patience so beautiful to me, she must henceforth become my bosom friend."

"Ah, Nina! may you never need her!"

"Do I not already?" she murmured, imperceptibly; then looked up gravely and calmly into his face. There was a beautiful and holy expression in her countenance, which was touching to him, by its tinge of sadness.

"Nina, shall I confess to you in what form you usually stand before my mind? Listen, then. As the image of Faith standing on a wave-worn rock, waters dashing, and winds beating around it. All the world seems dark to my sight, but that one figure dark with sin, lashed by the tempest of passion. Still firmly and erect that fair figure stands, the hands crossed upon the breast, the eyes raised to Heaven."

She was still looking at his face in that mild, earnest way which, with the old times, he had thought gone by, and he should never see again.

There was now no longer, for the moment, so severe a reserve between them; the confidence and simplicity of their communion during their childhood had returned in the elevated nature of the subjects that engrossed their minds.

A smile of wondering pleasure had gradually spread its sunlight over her features, as he spoke.

"Ah! how beautiful is this dream of yours; you have ennobled me by it to myself. Antony raised me so far above myself, that the very thought makes a Heaven of my soul. This is evidently the reflection of a reality—of that night which was so important to you when your faith for the first time stood forth unveiled before your spirit. It was a night never to be forgotten."

"The remembrance of it seems always hovering over my mind," said Antony; "it is strange that even while I lose sight of it partially, I feel it is there still."

"A thought occurs to me, Antony, called up by your words. You said you had permitted an idea of myself to be, in your mind, as the image of your faith. Is not this only what all Christian spirits should be to one another? Consider how glorious our existence would be did each individual member of the Universal Unity reveal itself to those around, as a monument—a personification of the truths they all profess?"

"Nina, a beautiful mind begets ideas too glorious to be realised here. This is one, it belongs to another world."

"Alas, yes! this is too true. I see, I understand now that the picture must not be suffered to remain even in your mind. You must banish it. For is it not one of the mistakes natural to us to make some fellow-creature the embodiment of an ideal perfection,

which cannot exist in man here? I must pray you to banish me from this picture in your mind."

She rose, saying it was time for her to return home, and, with Kathleen, left the room to prepare for her departure. As Nina moved away to the inner apartment, Antony looked wistfully, longingly, lovingly after her, and could have wept, not now for Ernest—not only for himself, but for her—for Nina Allingworth, that she was destined to be sacrificed on the altar of pride—given—thrown away to a being comparatively abject.

He felt he had never loved her yet so vehemently as now, and it was not only as the angel form of which he had spoken to her—it was not only as the companion, the sister of his early years, the only friend, the sympathiser in his thoughts, wanderings, and sorrows—it was not thus only that he now loved her, but also as the beautiful, the adorable, the perfect woman, and, alas, the unattainable!

Kate and Nina presently rejoined him, and they set out together, he accompanying them thoughtfully and in silence, as they walked in the calm and clear glow of the evening, towards the park.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BALL-ROOM.—“FAREWELL, A LONG FAREWELL.”

A DAY long looked forward to, whether with dread or with desire, fills us, as it approaches, with a certain strange doubt as to the possibility of its ever arriving. We have pictured it so often to our imaginations, dreamt of it as come, dreamt of it as past, contemplated it in so many various aspects, hoped for so many various results from it, and it has become to us so much a thing of fancy, that we can hardly believe it capable of embodying itself into a reality. Then, when at last it arrives, it is often wonderfully different from what our expectation had portrayed, and, indeed, we with difficulty recognise it as the true original of the portrait our minds have been so long contemplating.

The day long dreaded by Antony now at length approached.

It is strange to observe with what different degrees

of welcome the same day is hailed by different individuals.

The first of September, which Antony had been for for many, many months awaiting with a premature melancholy, was greeted by Gladis and Howel with bounding hearts; it was the last day of their unmarried lives, the next would unite them in the bond—indissoluble but by death.

On the first of September, too, Kathleen was received as an inmate at the mansion of Llanawr, and her fond brother believed it a happy day for her, from whose mind the shadow that had not long since so sadly darkened it, was gradually, to all appearance, rolling away. Even Antony's quick vigilance had not been able to detect the deep traces which grief often leave in so young a heart after its heavy visitation; for she was so cheerful, healthful, and affectionate, that Antony little guessed how the sensitive spirit was still painfully oppressed, or how difficult it still was to conceal from him the force with which the shock that her feelings had lately suffered still vibrated through her being. The first of September brought a sweet joy to her, in placing her in Nina's home, which in part distracted her thoughts from the sorrow of parting with her brother.

The first of September was also Clara's birthday, and a merry one it was for her, though, as she told Kathleen, it was melancholy to her to have arrived at the age of sixteen, since she was advised now to be

no longer a child, and to cease to laugh and run and play as heretofore, for that soon she would be a woman; "and it seems to me it must be horrible to be grown up," she said. "Only imagine me, Kate, a staid and solemn old lady! Terrible thought! I would pray the fates that I might never become one, could I always remain what I am now!"

"Then you think yourself at this moment the happiest little being in the world!"

"No, not at this moment, because I am just now bemoaning the mournful future, with its dreaded old maidism, or old matronism (the one is as bad as the other), its cares, its wisdom, its grey hair, knitting and spectacles. But when I am on the back of 'Cerito,' and there is a 'southerly wind and a cloudy sky,' and we fly together over the hills with papa and the merry good-humoured huntsmen to the meet—to the glorious meet—to hear the charming horns blow, and to see the pretty hounds, and then to watch the whole party burst forth over the country, which is like the breaking of a rocket into a hundred brilliant flying parts, then, at such times, I am indeed the happiest child in the world, if only that odious Lord Darcy be not in my presence!"

On the night of the birthday a juvenile ball was given at Llanawr Park, to which were invited all the gentry of the neighbourhood, and which promised to be fully attended by young and old.

What happy, fluttering little hearts beat beneath

the gay dresses of the children-guests ! what cheerful greetings were exchanged on all sides, as the company, after their reception by Lady Allingworth, trooped into the saloon, and proceeded to the ball-room ! What brilliant expectations of undefined delight for the coming hours filled the young minds ! With what a variety of pretty airs and graces did the several little maidens yield their hand to be led forth to the dance ! How proudly and how eagerly did mothers watch every motion of those among the young people whom they could call their own, as they fluttered to and fro in the crowd ! How certainly did each one believe that their own children were the most becomingly dressed and the best looking in the room, while they imagined themselves quite impartial judges. And then that long succession of old ladies seated in the most conspicuous part of the ball-room, in a line, like so many consequential books placed side by side on a shelf, as volumes perused long ago, and now destitute of interest ; how provokingly these old ladies patronized the rising generation with those prim smirks and smiles of theirs, whilst they carried on their sharp criticisms in an under tone. It was with an air of condescension that they allowed, as their own unbiassed opinion, that the Miss Allingworths certainly were the most beautiful girls in the room, but then they were "belles" even in London, and the eldest had been presented at court ; so no wonder they had

more style than the poor Miss Powels, or Sir Watkins Jones' daughters, or even than the four blondes, the Misses Jenkin Williams, who had learned dancing at Bath.

One wall-flower made inquiries of another, "Who was that girl who appeared to be superintending the motions of a tribe of smaller sisters, and who shared with them the characteristics generally, of broad cheeks, long chins, small eyes, and red ribbons?" The question travelled from wall-flower to wall-flower all along the line till it found a reply, and then travelled all the way back again in the same way to the first inquirer. It was the eldest daughter of the Reverend Bildad Donought, and the constellation in which she shone comprised all the little Donoughts. Dear me, yes! who could mistake them? and yet it was excusable, as they had certainly grown lately, and might be pronounced to have improved generally. Poor girls, of course they couldn't help being plain, or having those particular noses, or those red arms. One must pity but not blame them. It certainly was a little to be regretted that no kind friend should mention to the eldest Miss Donought that remarkably distressing trick she had of lifting her eyes frequently, with a doleful expression, towards the ceiling, as if she was of so unnatural a state of mind that she preferred communing with the chandeliers rather than with her partner.

"She looks an old maid already," remarked a spinster.

"Who knows but she has lost her heart?" observed a married lady.

"That is a neat little figure in the plain white muslin," said a lady in spectacles to her neighbour in a satin that vied with the rainbow in plurality of colours. "I wonder who she is?"

The neighbour thought it could be "no one in particular, with so *undressy* a dress."

"But take my word for it, my dear Mrs. Miles," continued the spectacles, (with her hand laid emphatically upon the plump arm of her neighbour,) "one never *can* judge from the gaiety of the dress whether the wearer is 'anything particular' or not. I have frequently observed that people of undoubted fortune or rank like simplicity of garb. It may be an affectation, you know. I dare say it is nothing else, but *so* it is. Now, depend on it, that's a genteel girl. Observe, she is very intimate with the Miss Allingworths; she is dancing with one of their brothers now, and her last partner was Lord H——; by-the-by, where is Lady H—— to-night? oh, there she is, gliding through *La Poule*, with all the state and dignity fit for a minuet. She is a haughty woman, but eminently aristocratic in appearance; and now I think of it, the little quiet white muslin figure was standing chatting with the Miss Allingworths in the

reception room when I entered, and I was the first arrival. I always like to be punctual, particularly on such occasions, for you know I am very intimate here, Mrs. Miles, and, besides, I always like to know all about everything from the beginning to the end."

Here Mrs. Donought approached—she was looking out for a seat among the female elders—and the lady of the many coloured robe, glad to lose the continuation of her chatty neighbour's long address, quickly drew together the widely spread folds of the satin, to allow the new comer to seat herself between her and the owner of the spectacles.

Mrs. Donought, therefore, sat down with an aspect of satisfaction, for she had at length succeeded in providing for her ten, for whose sake she had been toiling undauntedly ever since they had entered the house. The five girls were now launched out, each with a partner, into the dance, and the five boys had, through the good mother's exertions, got introduced to as many plain girls, who had despaired even of having one invitation to the dance throughout the evening.

"So," thought the provident parent, "they'll want no more introductions now, for there are ten of them, five of each, and they have nothing to do but change partners all through, and they will be kept busy nearly all the night!"

The spectacle-lady did not leave her new neigh-

bour time to continue with her own thoughts longer, for she quickly inquired the name of that strikingly genteel girl in white muslin, with the black hair and pretty face, who seems so very intimate with the Allingworth's? A flower of the aristocracy she presumed?

Mrs. Donought could only reply, with rapturous gratification, that the young lady pointed out was her own daughter!

The rainbow-lady simpered, "I thought as much," drew herself up, and laid out the satin folds in fuller display than ever.

The spectacle-lady looked suddenly humiliated, but resolved on an attempt to extricate herself from her mistake.

"I fancy, my dear madam, we may not be alluding to the same person."

Mrs. Donought thought there could be no doubt in the matter, as she saw no other girl in the room but her own in that style of red ribbon; and, in fact, Mrs. D—— had not yet looked at any other girl in the room but her own, hardly even at the before-mentioned five plain partners for her five sons, and it had not struck her that any other objects could be more attractive for other eyes than her Jemima.

"Red ribbons?" cried the spectacles, triumphantly, "the young lady I admire has no such appendages."

The object under discussion was at length made visible to the disappointed eyes of the mother of the red ribbons.

"What! that little thing a flower of the aristocracy?" cried the indignant lady, "My dear ma'am, she is only the sister of my husband's poor pupil—the deaf Antony Nayton."

"Ah, indeed! strange enough—indeed—yes. I know something of him—have met him—heard of him," stammered the spectacles, using her fan energetically; then added, with renewed courage,

"But the Naytons are of a good family, I am told."

"Many have been so, ma'am, at a remote period; at present they are miserably poor, quite fallen in the world! Indeed, ma'am, to confess the truth, the young man's education is barely——" here Mrs. D——nodded, and sighed, and shrugged her shoulders significantly.

"You don't say so!"

"A generally known fact, I assure you. But the Allingworths have shown the poor girl much kindness; and, indeed, are so good as to have her staying here for a short time. Of course, any such introduction must be of the highest advantage to her; and she is a nice young person—not unamiable. Indeed, I feel myself highly obliged and flattered by their condescension to our poor young friend's sister."

The rainbow now coughed so ill-naturedly and triumphantly, that the spectacles very soon moved

away to another part of the room, and presently sought to forget her little defeat in the pleasant excitement of whist.

At a distance stood Antony, gazing in his silence upon the glittering scene, and marking with delight the enjoyment of his sister. He had observed that Lady Allingworth was especially considerate for her, and seemed desirous of insuring her every pleasure throughout the evening, being constantly at her side and careful to provide for her frequent opportunities of dancing ; and how proud was Antony to behold her there and thus, in her gentleness, her quiet, bashful grace, with the freshness of youth, and the flush of cheerfulness mantling on her cheek, and ready smiles playing round her full red lips, a glow of innocent enjoyment on her face—the admired of many ! The simplicity of her dress rendered her almost remarkable in so gay an assembly : but he was the more proud that she could look so lovely without the aid of artificial ornament. She formed a striking contrast to Nina, whose rich and beautiful costume added to that natural dignity which was at all times remarkable in her, and which Kathleen did not possess or need.

From room to room, amid the brilliant glare of numberless lights, and the sparkling of numberless happy faces, and the sweet perfume and rich tints of many flowers, and the mingling of the joyous sounds of talking, laughing, and music, which he felt vibrat-

ing through his frame,—amid all this, passed Antony, more than usually sensible of the monotony of that silence which was ever around him, and overcome by a longing which he seldom now permitted to take possession of him, but which at this moment came on with an irresistible force,—a longing for the power of enjoying some of the sweet harmonies of existence. Frequently the sight of Kathleen, as she flashed by him in the waltz, recalled to his mind thoughts of their mother, and of her early life, of her light feet treading those same halls in the merry dance, of her laugh and her gay voice, and of how all her beautiful existence had long since passed away; he thought of her picture, up, hidden away, in the dark, ancient room, and grieved that he should not again have the luxury of contemplating it. Antony was sadder, sadder than ever, that night; the long expected night, the last at Llanawr, for him; the last at Ponterry; the last with Kathleen; and, oh! the worst of all! the last with Nina! His heart grew faint, as he thought of the approaching adieu, and gazed on the beautiful deeply-loved Nina. He could not but observe in her to-night a something different from what she had been in former times, on like occasions. Then, she had been wont to be, not only the ornament, but the life, of the goodly company; with elastic tread and ready grace, she had in those times flitted joyously to and fro among her guests, her voice the first in the song,

as her step in the dance. To-night, she glided through the maze of the company; her spangled dress floating as a cloud around her; her features of an alabaster whiteness; her soft, hazel eyes, no longer sparkling with the brilliancy of animation, but full of an earnest, sometimes regretful, expression; while, with a graceful dignity, she passed along, like a presiding fairy, with courtesy and kind smiles for all. She chiefly devoted herself to the children, for whom she was careful to provide amusement. And it was a heart-pleasing sight to behold her surrounded by the young beings, that all looked towards her with a grateful tenderness.

With Lord Darcy she danced but little, avoiding him as much as was consistent with courtesy, and thus obliging him to amuse himself with the lively Clara, who reluctantly permitted herself to be whirled round by him in the waltz, he stopping only to relate to her his successful betting adventures at the race-course, whence he had that day returned. His usual inattentions to Clara, whom he entirely neglected when in her sister's society, had excited in the spirited girl a dislike to him, which she was at no pains to conceal.

Antony could not but watch Nina's every movement, and yet so quick, so stolen were his glances, that no looker-on could have detected his constant attention to her. He felt, rather than actually saw, her every position, act, and motion.

Thus passed the night till the hour of twelve, when there was a general movement to the supper-room. Here the banquet was richly spread, and lay invitingly awaiting the attention and assaults of the guests. Several tables were covered with every kind of refreshment, and the greater part of the company were enabled to seat themselves and enjoy the feast together.

Nina was weary; the heat, noise, and clatter of the room was oppressive to her; and she found an opportunity to glide away unnoticed, Kathleen being the only one aware of her escape.

Nina proceeded along the saloons and the dancing-room, towards the conservatory beyond. The silent emptiness of the rooms, in such contrast with the late noise and animation, was refreshing to her. She entered the conservatory, that glowed with the subdued light of Indian lanterns, beneath which richly-blossomed plants lay like a hanging curtain, of all hues. Further on, the glass door opened on the garden. There was no moonlight; coloured lamps, fixed in the shrubberies, illuminated the grounds; while the purer light of heaven's myriad suns beamed from a dark sky. The cool night air came sweetly to meet her, bearing with it the fragrance of flowers. It was so calm, there without, she longed to step into the garden; and she was about to do so, when she was startled by the unexpected sight of Antony. He was seated in the conservatory, on a bench near

the open door, and was bending forward, leaning his elbow on his knee, and his head upon his hand; his eyes were covered, so that he saw her not.

Nina was as if spell-bound, and could not move a limb. Was it that Antony, though unable to hear her step, became instinctively conscious of her presence, that he suddenly raised his eyes, and met hers?

How sad and pale he was! His eyes darting forwards, his whole countenance marked by traces of the agony of restrained and passionate feeling. Now, as he springs forwards, a new fire is shot from his face; he catches her hand eagerly, when a something indefinable in her quiet dignity seems to recall him to his wonted self-command. He lets fall the hand, and withdraws a little step from her; but his voice changes, falters, as he speaks, and cheek and eye glow with a wild animation.

"Nina, I am happy—if, indeed, to-night I can apply to myself that word—happy to meet you thus; to see you once more alone; to give you my farewell,—unseen, by other eyes."

"Nay, do not speak of going away yet! Will you not come in to the supper? The evening is not half over."

"But I do not speak of a good-night only, but of a good-bye—a long, long good-bye."

A thrill shot through her whole frame at his last words.

"Oh, not to night, Antony! We shall see each other again; perhaps several times before that word need be said."

"No, Nina, not again! Who can tell when—or if ever again? I have parted with my sister; I had parted with you also, in my heart; for I had not hoped for this—this privilege of speaking with you again."

"What can you mean? Kate had not apprised me of this," began Nina, with agitation.

"I requested she would not do so—wherefore disturb your lighthearted enjoyment of this brilliant evening, by the consciousness of what *my* heart was suffering. Do I not know how kind, how ready are your sympathies? How willingly you permit your own spirit to be dimmed by the shadow that overspreads another's? I am therefore selfish, perhaps, in thus revealing to you the truth now; but, oh! does not the occasion fully excuse me. Could I look upon you—upon *you*, Nina, for the last time, and be dumb?"

"Do you then go away to-morrow?" she stammered forth. He read the words on her lips.

"When the dawn comes, I go."

Nina turned her head away; she could with difficulty conceal that she trembled in every limb. The moment of a bitter trial was at hand, and his words—"a last good bye," rang mournfully, powerfully, despairingly within her. A few moments, however,

sufficed for her to recover from the surprise, and she presently turned towards him, and looked calmly, though sorrowfully, upon him, as she said,

“It was truly kind of you, Antony, to spare me the knowledge of this until now; since a farewell with such an old and dear friend is indeed fraught with deep sorrow; you have been as a brother to me, and——”

“And now that the last scene of the child-drama, in which we have both had parts, is about to close, it is time that I should express to Miss Allingworth the rich thanks due to her from me, for her every act and word, throughout; for her sympathy, her condescension, her tenderness, and care for the deaf mute, the once despised child, him whose sanity was questioned, and whom no one loved; and, also, for all the happiness that my lonely childhood ever knew, after my mother’s death.”

It was a rare sight, that of the two young lovers standing together, each resolved to conceal from the other the true extent of their mutual interest.

“Nina,” he continued, as he caught her hand and pressed it between his own, reverentially, “Nina, I thank you for your prayers, and for your sisterly affection. To my life’s end these gifts will be the most precious I shall ever know.”

She shook her head with a half regretful smile, and then turned her face towards the varied blossoms that waved to and fro with the slight breeze, entering

from the garden, and appeared to nod their farewells to Antony. As he continued to speak, she stripped a purple-starred flower from its stem, abstractedly, and played carelessly with it while she listened.

"You will think of me sometimes, Nina? you will look back to the dear years of our childhood, which you made so blest to me? May I hope this? Will you remember sometimes our first interview in the presence of my mother's smile? our many conversations, our wondering thoughts and convictions concerning the religion which has since, and will ever be, our strongest consolation? our mutual danger in the tempest, on that evening when thy prayers were answered? and that happy day, when we knelt together in the temple of our one Father, and together assumed that mighty armour which will be our un-failing protection throughout our lives? will you let a memory of me thus twine itself into all your dearest recollections of the past?"

"Yes, yes, Antony."

"Will you, for my sake, love my sister?"

"Yes, yes," and added imperceptibly, "more even than for her own."

"I thank you; and now, my whole mind and heart have become so moulded to your own, it is cruel to wrench it apart; but—I leave you, beautiful Nina, to sail on in the glow of the world's sun; while I—plunge to the antipodes, where all is night."

"But, Antony, we will perhaps see each other

sometimes in London. My father may defer his proposed life in Scotland till another year is past."

"I could not then presume to seek your society. You will be in the high walks of life ; I in its humble shades. Could the poor merchant's clerk visit the Lady Darcy in her palace?"

She drew her hand suddenly away, with an expression of disdain, which he could not understand.

"Give me not such a name," she said ; "I hate the sound—it shall never be mine."

He did not distinctly read the words ; or thought he must have mistaken then, he therefore gazed the more intently at her lips.

"Alas !" he said, "that the chasm that then will be between us should be so unalterably wide, wider even than heretofore or now ; widened even more and more by that calamity, which prevents the possibility of its being ever bridged over."

A sudden animation lighted up her face.

"No, Antony, you will rise triumphant over this, and all calamities. Your energy will bear you above every difficulty ; your poetic and refined mind, your high aspirations after truth, will lift you above the influence of evil—you will increase in power and excellence ; you will become *great*, and be, wherever your path leads you, a shining light, and a mark of God's love and favour."

"Golden words," cried Antony, clasping his hands with rapturous eagerness. "Heaven grant me power

to fulfil your noble prophecy. I were not worthy to receive such, did I not strive mightily to verify it. Nina, you are my good angel; the guiding compass of my past and future; my Star of Bethlehem, which has led me to the shrine where truth lay. Nina, I go to obey your behests."

"Not mine, Antony, say rather the impulses of your own energetic nature; my words, so feeble and unworthy their design, must perish in the utterance, only your own strength of purpose can be effectual."

"What, Nina," he interrupted, "can you believe *my soul* deaf to your penetrating voice, or that each word will not be treasured within for ever? Oh, Nina, you know you hold my very heart in your own hand!"

"Take it back then, take it back, Antony, or you can do nothing of the great work before you; without a heart, earnest and resolute in your duty, you are incapacitated for anything."

"*The past* has sealed it to you, Nina."

"Then the past must be undone."

"Impossible!"

"Then it must be forgotten by you, Look not behind, Antony; remember, that with joys, sorrows also are gone by. Our child-love was given us to make us then happy; now, it is no longer needed. New enjoyments are before you, if you seek them; enjoyments more fitted to the manly spirit. Though

to me the olden times may remain dear and sacred, by you they must be forgotten."

"And you would have such recollections pass away, as the perfume of this flower dies out?" said Antony, breaking a white lily from its stalk, and holding it towards her. "See! it is the noblest of flowers; the sweetness of its perfume, to my senses, the most intense, and yet it must perish—perish. Oh! must sweet memories thus die?" He was about to throw it impatiently on the ground, when she made a gesture to detain it.

"Give it to me Antony; I would not have it perish by your hand. Only if the perfume enervates you, need it be cast aside. This lily is a fitter emblem of our mutual friendship than you imagine. The essence lives as long as the flower itself; and though the form wither, can be extracted by a practised hand, and preserved for ever."

He smiled with delight, as he watched keenly her every word; then, kissing the lily, he bent forward, and fixed it in her hair, saying, "Beautiful as Nina; pure as her heart; sweet as our friendship; to her I consign it."

At this moment he perceived, by her gestures, that her ear caught an unwelcome sound: steps were approaching. He pressed her hand hastily to his burning lips, and disengaged from her fingers the purple flower they still held.

"You will give it to me, this tiny gift?" he said;

“and still, still, Nina, thy sister-love—thy prayers, will be mine?”

“For ever, Antony; as long as those glossy petals retain their hue, the memory of you will dwell in me—it is an everlasting flower; take it for my sake. Farewell. You bear God’s blessing with you.”

He left her; he had passed out into the garden. The planets shone less brightly; falling stars shot through the darkness; the flowers wept; and low winds sighed, moaning Antony’s farewell in the ear of Nina, and echoing the imperceptible breathings of her sad heart around him.

CHAPTER X.

THE BUGLE-HORN!

AGAIN the drawing-room became studded with the gay forms of the company, and music again resounded cheerfully. Songs and dances by turns enlivened the walls; merriment now seemed to have reached its height, and that pleasant hour had arrived, when, in such an assembly, all faces become brighter than they have yet been all night. Young people look into each other's eyes with more confidence and penetration; goodwill and friendliness seem more universal; and all the gay, happy hearts appear to open genially to one another.

When Nina again rejoined this company, she was, of all, the most animated. Her cheek glowed; her whole countenance was redolent with fire and brilliancy; a snowy lily gleamed in her shining hair; her voice resounded in the song, loud and clear, as if it sought to penetrate even to the deaf and absent

Antony; and those by whom she was admired and loved, gathered round her, more than ever enraptured with her beauty. Lord Darcy was, of all, the most wild and vehement in following, complimenting her, and courting her attention. Sir William had been careful not to make him aware of her unwillingness even to listen to the proposals made known to her by her father in his name; and he had, therefore, felt till now bold, and over-confident of her having received them favourably: an idea which had rendered him frequently strangely careless in his manner of carrying on the business so important to a suitor, of studying the tastes and pleasure of the young lady, and displaying himself with advantage to her eyes.

She had, however, throughout this evening, so evidently avoided him, that he, somewhat piqued, and indignant at the inattention of the future Lady Darcy to her future lord's will and pleasure, though it necessary to make her acquainted with the dissatisfaction she had excited. Accordingly, he would no longer accept from her either refusal or evasion; and she found herself again his partner, forced to resign herself to his boisterous companionship, and wafted by him swiftly along and away, till finally conducted through the conservatory, and obliged to sit down with him on the very bench which she had last seen occupied by Antony.

Now compliments and reproofs, jestingly mingled,

were poured into her ear, till her companion, becoming more and more bold at finding himself thus alone and face to face with the enchanting and animated Nina, spoke no longer undisguisedly of the subject then uppermost in his thoughts.

At such a moment Nina lacked neither courage nor spirit; she was neither startled, nor intimidated, by his apparently irresistible vehemence. Never before had she, when in his presence, felt so fearless or so strong in her own resolution; never before had her whole spirit so revolted against the idea which he was now so eagerly urging upon her. The broken stem of the lily, which Antony had lately touched was beside her; she gazed upon the very spot where, but an hour since, had stood the man whom she only and truly loved; his last farewell still echoed in her thoughts, and the voice of her own heart rose powerfully within, louder, far louder, than any other that fear, or despair, or doubt, or even the consideration of her father's ambition and unbending resolution, could excite.

With the utmost impatience, and with increasing displeasure, she listened to his jests and too familiar expressions, as he called her his Nina, his own little Nina; assuring her that ever since he had known her, when a little governess-taught girl, he had an eye to her becoming one day a handsome lady, such as he now looked upon, just fitted to be a Lady Darcy.

Nina could bear no more; she sprang up, disen-

gaged herself from him, spoke a few decisive and unmistakeable words, and fled—he hastily following—back into the room filled with company.

She had been already generally missed, and the children, more blithe and merry now, than even at an earlier period of the evening, crowded round, as she reappeared, to entreat her to join their game, while another dance was called for, and others of the guests advanced, to request her partnership during it.

At the same time the hated voice suddenly and unexpectedly again sounded in her ear, and the low muttered words, "Escape is not so easy for my pretty saucy Nina,—I'll have her yet," made her whole frame tremble. It was but for an instant, however, for as she glanced timidly round, to discover if the supposed speaker were indeed beside her again, or if her hearing had deceived her, she saw that Lord Darcy was moving away, and she caught Clara's whispered remark, who was now beside her: "Rude man that he is! he comes thrusting a way through the company, towards you, Nina, in his usually boisterous style, and then, after startling you with his hoarse, unpleasing whisperings, flies off again, in another direction," she said, casting an angry glance towards him, as he retreated, adding, "What a strange humour he is in, to-night. See him, now, stretched upon the ottoman, looking most cross and contemptuous, with that odious moustache of his!" Nina made no reply.

Long into the blushing morning continued the revelries of the company. That white lily, in that shining hair, gleaming here and there, gliding to and fro,—Nina, still the guiding-light in all the crowd of pleasure-seekers,—Nina, the bright and smiling one, who carried ever deep within her a heart robbed of all spark of hope or joy, and sadly, darkly desolate—who that then beheld her, could have guessed the truth? Not one.

And it is often thus; few, indeed, can tell the true state of the inward spirit, from the outer being. We recognise disease and danger in the deceptive hue of health that tinges the cheek of the dying, but in the animated smile and joyous voice, we read not the acute sufferings of an aching heart.

As daylight forced itself into the dancing-room, mocking by its garish light the dull flames of the many tapers, the company at length began to separate. The cocks crew from behind the trees, the starling's shrill note sounded in the ears of the guests, and carriages began to roll in quick succession away through the Park.

The cloak-room was crowded; shawls and mantillas were being wafted to and fro, and finally wrapt, like heavy clouds, about the gay and varied dancing-dresses. The spectacle-lady was grumbling at the disappearance of her cloak, for she had staid till the last, for the same reason that she had come the first; and the rainbow-satin gown was being tucked up

inside out, and covered, as well as its wearer, in a huge dark wrapper.

In short, the whole scene might have served to remind those who were *opera goers*, of the appearance of the theatre, when the performance is over, the gas turned off, twilight glimmers down from the gallery, and the dingy servants begin hastily to unroll dingy and dark cloths, over the gold satin-trimmed boxes,—when reality makes itself chillingly known to us, destroying the enchantment of the past few hours, and oppressing our memory of the brilliant and agreeable delusion.

Nina still untiringly lent a helping hand here, while children yawning, and at length acknowledging themselves to be a little sleepy, were tied up in comforters, and the ten Donoughts, with their gratified parents, set off, to trot homewards over the grass.

Now, suddenly, the blast of a horn resounded from the distance,—only a few heard it—and those children who inquired what that sound meant, were told it was but the bugle-horn of the coach, as it drives out of the village, carrying its passengers far away,—perhaps to London.

Then Nina grew suddenly pale, and left the room, to glide tremblingly and unseen to her own chamber. None guessed with what a pang that blast of the bugle-horn had penetrated to her very soul.

Kathleen already lay slumbering,—Clara too—and she was dreaming of her being still a merry child,

gifted by good fairies with an eternal childhood ; and her sleep, with its enchanting visions, lasted long into the day, while Nina had not yet found or even sought repose, but sat, with aching head and fainting heart, in the adjoining chamber ; and while Kathleen, after but a short rest, had risen and gone out with nurse, to fulfil a long-promised engagement, namely, to witness the marriage of Gladis Evans to Howel Philips, and to mingle with her prayers for blessings on the newly-wedded, her earnest thoughts for the beloved Antony, and her tears at her separation from him.

* * * * *

Before the afternoon of that day, arrived a letter at Llanawr Park, brought by the servant of Lord Darcy for Miss Allingworth. The bearer had orders to await an answer, and it was accordingly delivered to Nina, who now lay upon her bed ill with fatigue and over excitement. She, however, roused herself to peruse the note, which appeared short and hastily written ; and requesting Kathleen, who sat tenderly watching by her side, to bring her pen and paper, she unhesitatingly, and with a firm hand, wrote the reply, folded it, and asking Kate to carry both to her mother, to be considered by her and Sir William before the answer should be dispatched, she sank back again with increased weariness on the pillow.

It was well for Nina that she possessed a mother so tenderly affectionate, and studious to spare her

beloved child pain as far as was possible; for the storm of displeasure which these epistles excited in her father, would have been at such a time as this terribly trying for her to bear.

But by the gentle persuasions and well-exercised influence of Lady Allingworth, his indignation was at length so far quelled, and the impatient voice of his ambition so far silenced, by the consideration, that though they need not give up all hope of her finally yielding her consent, yet it were wiser at present to cease urging a point which she seemed as yet unable to bear,—that when he entered her chamber to try the force of his own arguments in changing her determination, he did the cruel part with less obstinacy and far more gentleness than was usual with him; and when, with distress and alarm in her pallid countenance, and her arms eagerly clinging to him, she implored that he would not force upon her a marriage from which her whole heart and mind revolted with horror, since she found it impossible to entertain for the proposed husband any feeling but one of unalterable dislike, Sir William found his unhappy daughter's words unanswerable, and was forced, though with painful reluctance, to permit Lady Allingworth to dispatch the letter Nina had already written. He, however, added, a few lines from himself, apologising for the waywardness of his daughter, which, he said, though he at present felt

it wiser not to resist, would, he believed, with time and consideration, pass away.

Nina, ignorant of this, was now greatly relieved ; and, as she expressed herself to her father, fervently thankful to him that the fate so terrible to her was thus permitted to leave her untouched. And now she endeavoured to silence the fears and ill-bodings which still oppressed her, and to chase from her memory those threatening words muttered in her ear, "I'll have her yet," which had haunted her ever since their utterance.

* * * * *

A new joy awaited Kathleen a few days later ; a letter from Augustus brought relief for the anxiety she had felt for him ever since their parting. It told that Marley had been forced to fly to America to escape the pursuit of his numerous and greedy creditors, that he dared not return to England, and that thus Augustus was for the present at least, and perhaps for a considerable length of time, freed from the persecution he had long suffered, as well as from many of his liabilities.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT TO THE METROPOLIS.

WHILE Miss Donought's curls dangled languidly on either side of the French dictionary,—that dictionary now so precious to her, since it had been held by the hands, and gazed upon by the eyes of him who had become the hero of her tenderest and most romantic visions,—that dictionary which had been the companion of his hours of French study, and the witness of the first development of her soft emotions; whilst Jemima Donought fixed her small eyes replete with sentimentality upon this dictionary's pages, and sighed over those dear blots which she fondly believed had fallen from his pen, (and not, as was truly the case, from those of those insignificant little sisters, whose French exercises had required the aid of this volume as much as his,) and whilst a flood of flattering recollections rushed upon her as her glance was caught in the columns of the let-

ter J, by the words, "Joyeux, jour, jolie, joue, jeune," which surely whenever they again might present themselves before her pupil, must bring to his mind the fair instructress and all her amiabilities in those past hours, spent so deliciously in her company, and that of the French grammar; whilst Jemima, we say, dwelt thus pathetically in the past, Antony Nayton was setting earnestly and vigorously forward, according to the last injunctions of Nina, to meet the uncertain future blindly, but with cheerfulness.

He had arrived in the city before seven in the morning, but found the great hive all awake and alive. He and his luggage descended from the coach-top; but the question now was, where were they to deposit themselves?

He felt much as a man may do, who, descending in a balloon over the ocean, seeks in vain for a solid support on which to rest his machine, or even set his own foot.

Every man's face into which he looked seemed that of a knave, and the very children appeared to him little embodiments of impish cunning and dishonesty. The strange contrast with all he had been accustomed to at Ponterry, bewildered him; but he had already planned what should be his first step, and having consigned his luggage to the care of the superintendent at the little coach-office at which he had alighted, and made some inquiries as to where low-priced lodgings were to be obtained, he set out

to seek for himself what must now be to him "a home."

As the day advanced, and he had not yet succeeded in finding an abode suitable in price or convenience, difficulties and adventures increased in frequency around him. He found himself often in danger of being run over or trodden down in the crowded thoroughfares, where sound could not warn the deaf one as others, of the various perils into which he unconsciously brought himself.

That which strikes the countryman on first arriving in a great city, in strongest contrast to his usual life, is the unceasing uproar, the mingling of thousands of confused and unrecognisable voices which stun his ears on all sides; and, though it might be supposed that this grand change, after the stillness and calm of country life, could not be discerned by Antony, yet we must remember that what is to our ears *sound* is to the air in which it exists *vibration*, and therefore by the quick and susceptible sense of feeling might, to the deaf youth, be communicated in an intense degree. Thus the noises not only of the rolling vehicles, but even of voices and distant sounds, had now an effect upon Antony's whole frame of a most painful kind. His limbs trembled, even his head became confused, and his eyes smarted, their nerves being so keenly sensitive to the constant motion among forms dashing past them in all directions; and it was not till he had

invigorated himself by a substantial breakfast, and striven vigorously to calm his excited mind, that he could encounter again the bewildering scene without its disturbing his equanimity.

He was at length successful in his search, and having established his small property in an upper room of a tall and dingy house in — Row, in the dingy neighbourhood of Chancery Lane, he started for the commercial house of R—— and M,—— which was now to be the scene of his labours. It was not till the next day in the afternoon that he was able to seek out Ernest, and in this he met with new difficulties, as he had to find his way to the West End, starting at first in a wrong direction, and, when at length beyond the meridian line of the great Regent Street, being greatly puzzled as to the course that should be then followed. He had the same perplexity to surmount as a foreigner would experience in the same case, for when he asked for instruction in the route to be taken, the unknown names of the various streets could not be read by him on the lips of strangers. Omnibuses were not then so numerous, nor their accommodation so low priced as now; added to which his little knowledge of the town made him unable to discover among the large printed words covering their sides which among them would be most likely to convey him in the required direction.

At length, being in the neighbourhood of Edge-

ware Road, and despairing of ever finding himself in Saint James's, he plunged into a stationer's shop, purchased a map of London, and obtained also the joyful information that, by throwing himself into one of that long file of cabs that lined one side of the street, he might in the course of a quarter of an hour find himself at his destination.

All difficulties thus agreeably surmounted, he presently reached the elegant lodging inhabited by Ernest, and, understanding that he was not now at home, requested that he might be allowed to await his return in his sitting-room. Here accordingly Antony established himself, and was soon too deeply engaged in perusing a pamphlet treating of politics and statistics, which he found upon the table, to mark the passing of the hour-quarters, more than three of which had gone by before a cabriolet dashed up the street, the spirited steed of which was reined in at the door of Ernest's lodgings by a pair of light-grey kid-gloved hands, the owner of which exhibited also the countenance of a middle-aged gentleman with features of a refined cast, and of pallid complexion, surrounded by bushy dark hair and whiskers. Ernest Forsythe was seated beside him, and alighted on the pavement, almost as swiftly as the little tiger, who, springing down from behind his master, was now enabled by rising on tiptoe to give a thundering salutation to the closed door.

Ernest had shaken the hand of his friend, and was

about to enter, when he turned back and again addressed him.

“Come, good cousin, you will not forget your promise to run up to my rooms for five minutes. There’s the Berlin Gazette, with that article on Lord J——’s measure that we spoke of, lying on the table ready to resign itself to your honoured inspection.”

The owner of the grey-kid gloves threw down the reins, his small tiger having already, with wonted alacrity, posted himself under the chin of the impatient steed (bearing about the same proportions in size to the large and powerful animal that a jug placed under the cock of a barrel does to the whole spirit-laden cask itself), and he then swung himself gracefully down from his seat, with the negligent air of a decidedly fashionable man, and arranging neckerchief and whiskers abstractedly as he mounted the stone steps, followed Ernest into the house. They were informed by the servant that a gentleman whom he believed to be a foreigner, from his manner of speaking, was waiting the return of Mr. Forsythe in the parlour; and accordingly Ernest opened the door prepared with both a French and German salutation, ready to use whichever should be found necessary, to the unexpected acquaintance of either nation who might be awaiting him within; but, lo! language of any kind might be reserved for a more suitable visitor than this. A clap on the shoulder to rouse Antony from his political meditations, and then a hearty

shake of the hand was the friends' greeting, and Ernest proceeded to introduce Antony to his companion without loss of time, speaking with his fingers as he informed the deaf youth that it was no other than Sir Frederick Melville, whom he now saw, and adding—"He knows you already. Lady M—— has known you for some years past, and I was speaking to him of you as we drove hither."

Antony's bow was, however, but stiffly returned by Sir Frederick, who, with three quick, scrutinizing glances, one at the young man's face, the next, like a flash of the electric fluid, shooting thence to his feet, the third, starting up again as swiftly, to the head, yet apparently measuring the entire stature with nicety in its ascent, seemed to make himself perfect master of the proportions, person, parts and powers of the subject before him.

"Ha!" said the other, turning away as he concluded his examination, "so, Forsythe, this is the young poet whose pathetic tales, penned in his childhood, drew tears from the eyes of Lady Melville. Dear me! dear me! Stone deaf, too, I think you said. Yes!—well, you know there's genius, unmistakeable genius in the eye; something interesting, too, in the whole appearance; the contour of the face almost feminine, yet in the brow a strong development of the —— Yes, yes, it is a face I fancy I have seen before, but, perhaps, only in fancy—the personification of some ideal of mine, nothing more.

Hem! so we have here a deaf poet, have we? Dear me! dear me!"

Ernest was too well accustomed to Sir Frederick's peculiar habit of running on thus upon any subject which happened for the moment to attract and withhold his attention, to be surprised at Antony Nayton's having called forth so long a string of remarks from the diplomatist.

"Well, but, Forsythe, what is your friend doing here?" continued Sir Frederick in his quick way, "come to town to seek in this medley of all trades a market for his brain-spun wares! Eh? He will find them fetch him but little, I fear. Authors have but a bad chance in a city, or in a nation, where the produce of the loom or of the mine supersede vastly, in public estimation, that of the imagination. Another misfortune attending the rhyming or sentimentalising talent is, you know, that it generally unfits the owner for more practical and far more useful professions. "Now, there is evidently a powerful capacity there," he said, waving his hand slightly in the direction of Antony, whose downward bent head was now turned towards a lithograph of a clever caricature, which he had lifted from the table—"there is capacity there, which it were a sad pity should be lost in a life of dreaming idealism."

"The wonted penetration of my clever cousin in reading character at first sight, is, however, a little at fault here," interrupted Ernest; "for the gentleman

before us, though possessed of all the intellectual power which you have ascribed to him, is verily no dreamer, nor is he incapacitated by his taste for authorship for a life of active and practical usefulness."

"Indeed, indeed. Well, I am glad to be so mistaken. A man who possesses talent and energy, which latter is in fact the parent of all genius, may, you know, fit himself for the highest and broadest walks of life, if only he will consent not to confine himself to the limited ones at first marked out for him by his taste or fancy."

The foreign newspapers now attracted his attention, and catching them up, he proceeded, his brows drawn together by a slightly contemplative frown, to pass his eye quickly down the columns, apparently acquiring by that comprehensive glance over the printed letters, as by his first look at Antony, a knowledge of the character and design of the whole, but extracting from it every statement or fact desired.

This business over, he threw the paper on the table, and as he began to draw on the grey glove, glanced at the pamphlet still lying open on it, which Antony had pushed from him on their entrance. Sir Frederick, after looking thoughtfully at it, and then from Ernest to Antony by turns, seemed to recall to his mind where and in whose company he found himself, and said, smiling, "My cousin's young friend has, I see, chosen a subject which, I should guess, must possess little interest for him. The study of a

paper such as we have here, can surely be hardly palatable to his genius. A poet reading statistics!"

Antony was looking at him as he spoke, and slightly blushing, said, "A poet need not be only a poet."

"Bravo!" cried the other in the midst of his surprise, as he turned to Ernest. "But what have we here? there is some mistake; did you not tell me our new acquaintance was deprived of the power of hearing? or am I confusing some strange fancy of my own with——"

"No, you are right."

"But this gentleman has as good a pair of ears as you or I, coz!"

"Would that he had!" said Ernest, "but it is by the eye only that he reads your meaning, and if when you address me, he cannot watch your lips, he is utterly ignorant of what is said."

"A most singular and surprising sagacity," said Sir Frederick; "and his name, you told me, is, I think, Stanley?"

"Antony Nayton."

"Ay, ay. It had escaped me;" he turned to address him. "Mr. Nayton, permit me to congratulate you on the wonderful power, indeed the triumph, you have acquired over your calamity." Antony bowed slightly, that troublesome blush again mounting to his face.

"Your profession is, I think——" he lifted his

forefinger to his brow, thoughtfully, "You said, coz, I think, appointment in the Treasury. Eh?"

Ernest replied in the negative; but he hesitated to reveal to the Baronet at that moment, and in Antony's presence, the lowliness of the position in which he stood, contrasted with that of his fortune-favoured cousin. The deaf youth perhaps might have discerned something of this consideration for him in the countenance of his friend, and feeling that it rested with himself, rather than with the delicately kind Ernest, to acknowledge the humiliating truth, looked quietly at Sir Frederick, who was gazing inquisitively at him, and told him that he had yesterday entered upon an engagement as a merchant's clerk in a commercial firm in the city. The Baronet raised his eyebrows with a half smile of incredulity at the words "merchant's clerk," and looked to Ernest to ascertain if he had understood rightly. Then having already taken his hat with the intention of departure, he kissed his hand to his cousin, bowed stiffly to the other, and quitted the room.

"A strange fellow, is my cousin," said Ernest, as the cabriolet rolled away down the street. "The most careless, forgetful, kind-hearted, quick-sighted man in London; highly-educated, too, and vastly useful in the political line. You will be surprised to find, when you know him better, that though apparently thoughts, ideas, and facts are in his mind one confused medley, springing out into his conver-

sation by fits and starts, yet they are, in truth, well-arranged within there, in wonderful order; and Sir Frederick Melville possesses about the clearest head for business to be found in England."

"There is something in him which has already powerfully attracted me to him," said the other.

The friends now spoke together of their own plans for the future, each with a cheerfulness of word and manner which was far from their thoughts. Ernest said that his return to Germany was, for a short time, unavoidably delayed; but he did not add, that his reason for now remaining in London was expressly to be of use to Antony, who, except himself, possessed not one companion or friend in the whole vast city. He endeavoured in vain to prevail on Antony to make use of his well-filled purse, or even to give up his comfortless lodgings, and share his own, for the present at least.

Antony had resolved to make the small allowance his father had been able to settle on him, sufficient, united with his own earnings: and he felt that if he began to accept the proffered kindness of his friend, he should find it difficult to restrain his liberality.

A week passed on; and the interest which novelty had at first given to his occupations, wore away. Antony began to feel the monotony and dulness of his position as painfully as he had anticipated, even in his most gloomy forebodings. The business in the merchant's office occupied more time than he

had expected. Arithmetic employed great part of the day; the rest was spent in carrying information, or books of accounts, or letters from the house of business in the city to the fashionable residence of the head of the firm, at the West End. There were also letters to be copied, and foreign letters to translate, in which last duty he found himself especially useful. Perhaps his greatest personal annoyances arose from the tyrannies of the upper clerks, and the contempt which he frequently experienced from his equals in the office—a contempt excited, in their petty minds, by his infirmity.

It was a luxury to him, after days thus unsatisfactorily passed, to find, on returning in the evening to his own gloomy apartment, that Ernest was there awaiting him, and ready to entice him away to some place of amusement, or bring him to his own lodgings, or among his own friends. He had often suggested, and now urged, Antony to give his attention to a matter of public interest, and write some article upon it, for a magazine which was then popular. He promised to bring books, and all materials for the study, to assist in his carrying it out, and to dispose of the articles, when written, to the editor.

Delighted at an occupation so suitable to his tastes, Antony set himself cheerfully to the task, in such hours as were at his own disposal, which were, however, few enough, and mostly borrowed from his

sleep. But he was successful; and as he continued, the power of writing, inventing and of adapting facts and ideas to the subject before him, became more and more agreeable to himself, as well as more valued by his readers.

The second time he met Sir Frederick Melville, Antony was strolling, arm-in-arm, with Ernest, through the Park. The Baronet alighted from his horse, to walk some little way beside his cousin, in conversation, but he seemed not to recognise Antony, and even Ernest's attempts to bring him to his notice utterly failed. He spoke in a low voice when he wished what he said to be confidential; paid no attention to Ernest's occasional finger-talk to his companion, or the mention of Nayton's name, and presently rode off, giving Antony but a careless glance.

Antony could easily understand that Sir Frederick must have no wish to preserve an acquaintance with a "merchant's clerk;" and began to think that he had, perhaps, distressed or injured Ernest, slightly, in the eyes of his titled cousin, by so inconsiderately, in their first interview, making known to him that one whom Ernest honoured with his friendship, moved in so low a rank. This idea so took possession of, and grieved him, that he at length could not resist apologizing to Ernest for his thoughtlessness; but the reply was a hearty laugh—a reproving clap on the shoulder, and an assurance that, as soon as he should grow ashamed of his friend, he would

deserve to be kicked out of his own house, and that of any man calling himself a gentleman.

“You know I told you Sir Frederick is the most careless, forgetful fellow living. He has, probably, never again thought of you, or ‘Lady Melville’s poet,’ as he called you, or my friend the commercial clerk, since he saw you first; and you may meet him nineteen times more, face to face, without his so much as looking at you with any attention: when, the twentieth time, every word that has passed about you between us may flash before him, as he looks in your face; and he may be all cordiality. The fact is, his brains are usually occupied with the work he has applied them to, as his grand object in life; and since that deals with the masses of humanity—with nations—individuals seldom engage his separate thoughts.”

And now Antony felt ashamed of having ever expected that he, or his position in the world, could be of sufficient importance to attract the consideration of the diplomatist, even for a moment. On another occasion, he found the Baronet and a third gentleman in Ernest’s apartments. It was a rainy day: Ernest welcomed him warmly. Sir Frederick presently appeared to recollect him, and the modest Antony was in a short time occupied, as well as his companions, in smoking a cigar, while the conversation continued at an *andante* pace; and the deaf

youth found himself obliged by his friend to take part in it at intervals.

A month had nearly elapsed and Ernest still lingered in London; still he was as the kind elder brother to the deaf youth—in every way, helping, advising, and watching over him, and tenderly endeavouring to enable him to profit by his own experiences; while of his own state of mind and prospects, he never spoke.

Only on one occasion, allusion was accidentally made to the last few days Ernest had spent in Wales. He was sitting at his writing-table, about to reply to a letter which lay before him. Antony was by his side, and in answer to a remark from his companion, Ernest wrote:—

“There are some periods of our existence, which, if we would ever again be as we have been, must be utterly blotted out from the remembrance.”

“Do you think so, dear fellow?” began Antony; and added, thoughtfully as if unconscious of uttering the words; “yes, so it seems to us sometimes, but perhaps such recollections, when we are able to bear them, may be beneficial.”

“Nay, nay. Retrospection can be such to those only to whom memory has chiefly fair pictures to offer.”

“And yet—I hardly know why it is—but I think some minds find even in their saddest recollections, a peculiar holiness, a peace-giving influence.”

"Such minds cannot, then, be of a highly sensitive nature? They are as unruffled waters sheltered from storm and wind, that have never known the passions generally incident to their element."

"Perhaps you judge that, with me, the stream of feeling is thus ever calm?" asked Antony, with a significant smile.

"Yes, it is deep, but also tranquil."

"And do you envy these more apathetic natures of which you speak?"

"Perhaps not, for storms are noble and purifying. They do not last long, and the lake that is sheltered from them may also lose much sunlight."

"I lose no sunlight," replied Antony, quickly; and, in truth, he was right, for in all his darkest sorrows, the light of a fervent piety glowed ever brightly within his soul.

"But then, my good Antony, I always believe you to be an exception to the general laws of man's nature. I know not why it is, or how, that you appear to me to carry a little heaven ever about with you. Your very tears are never shed for yourself, but for poor grumbling fellows such as I. Indeed, I would willingly partake of your happy serenity and content."

"Serenity?" repeated Antony in his mind; "content? Ah! even Ernest does not yet know me. But it is better so."

He was abstractedly playing with a large and beau-

tifully formed feather pen which lay upon the ink-stand. Ernest's attention was attracted to it.

"Ah! that plume once adorned the poor eagle presented to me by my Swiss friend. It fell from the wing in his last struggle for freedom."

"Was the bird long in your possession?"

"For some months. He was a young and spirited creature, but I obtained an influence over him which in a degree tamed his wild nature."

"And when he *passively* endured his captivity did you believe him happy?" asked Antony, emphatically; but Ernest observed not the double meaning of his words.

"Alas, *that* I could not; he had once known liberty. His imprisonment was, therefore, too distressingly painful to him. I would not permit him to pine in the cage in which he had been presented to me, but placed him in my garden at T——, with only a chain affixed to his leg to prevent his flight. He was, however, still restless. One morning he was missing. I believed him stolen. Three days afterwards a shepherd brought him to me. He had been found upon the mountains, half dead with exhaustion. I restored him by care and attention, and for a time believed the adventure had somewhat reconciled his spirit to the yoke, but his next desperate struggle for relief was the last."

Antony examined, admiringly, the size, strength, and lightness of the glossy black plume.

"It seems sad, indeed, that a thing created for such noble flights should have been doomed to uselessness," he said.

"Nay, but it may soar even yet! And let it soar, dear fellow! take it, write with it, let it now soar to the brilliant regions of poetry or philosophy. Spring upon the eagle's wing of your genius, friend Antony, and let it bear you at length away from what appears a hopeless imprisonment with dull arithmetic counting-house, away into a happy intellectual freedom!"

Antony looked smilingly and joyfully up, and Ernest continued:—

"Take courage. Fame will break for you the chain of necessity which now binds you to the earth, and by your pen you will at length obtain for yourself a happy flight."

"Dear Ernest, thank you, thank you a thousand times for your precious words. I should, indeed, have never found nerve even to try my wings, but for your kind encouragement."

And now Ernest again turned his attention to the letters before him, which were not yet completed, while the deaf friend fell into a reverie on the unfortunate fate of the brave and kingly bird, and moved by a peculiar sympathy in his sufferings, wrote thus with the eagle's plume.

"Oh, thou, dear Heaven! with glorious light floods glowing,
How pants my spirit faint toward thee to fly!
Oh, whisp'ring gales! from happy mountains flowing,
How taunt ye me with tales of far-off joy!"

" Here to the cold, hard earth enchained for ever,
Freedom and happy flight are mine no more ;
My stiffen'd pinions ope and spread and quiver,
Then, like my heart, droop heavier than before.

" Beloved Sun ! thy very smile is saddening,
Rousing in me, e'en as it makes fair flowers,
Memories that are most sweet and yet most maddening,
Memories of youth's once free, unfettered powers.

" Thus beauteous wert thou in thy glittering whiteness,
When, from my Alpine nest, I first did spring ;
And toward the fiery fountain of thy brightness,
Soared, with undazzled eye, and untired wing.

" Oh, glorious flight ! then, too, thy golden burning,
With rapt'rous joy, my brother eaglets hailed ;
Kings of the feather'd race, the low earth spurning,
Launched on our native ether on we sailed !

" I envy you your freedom, clouds of heaven !
I envy tiny birds, that all the day
May flit from bough to bough ! I envy even
The very lambs I once had made my prey !

" Oh, woe the day ! and woe the fatal hour,
My captor drew me from my happy skies !
Wounded I fell, a slave to man's stern power,
Doomed to live on in grief's wild agonies !

" Thou tyrant ! wherefore boast of mind and reason,
Yet multiply the sufferings of thy prey ?
E'en from the eagle learn a gentler lesson,
Thy victim torture not, but quickly slay.

" Ah, wherefore live ! ah, wherefore linger longer,
The pining yearnings of regret to bear ?
I'm weary, weary of my quenchless anger,
The silent burning frenzy of despair !

" Dear Sun ! thy lovely daughter, Day, is fleeting,
Fast from my amorous sight, and I must mope
All night ; mine eager eyes no kind beam greeting,
Blind as the heart that cannot look on hope.

"Then fare thee well! before thy dawn to-morrow,
My murmurs shall be dumb, resigned my breath;
I will not longer live a slave to sorrow,
'My heart is broken, freedom is in death."

Antony had hardly written the last line when Ernest caught them up, read them, and, evidently touched, said:—

"Yes, yes; thank you, Antony. Your verses will form for me a beautiful memorial of my lost favourite;" and, folding the paper, he placed it in his bosom.

"Yes, keep the plume, and may it be more successful in obtaining freedom for you than it was for the unhappy bird!"

"I will write with it my most important compositions," said the pleased Antony. "Ah, Ernest! it is to you I owe my power of speech! Now, also, it is you who will make my pen eloquent!"

"And has not Antony preserved my life to me?" said the other quickly; "and now, friend, we will hunt away gloomy thoughts; and I, who have been but an egotistical dog all my life, will begin to change a selfish existence into one that may, in some degree, serve others."

"Selfish!—nay, you are indeed the last man in the whole world to whom such a word can be applied. You, who devote your life to others——"

But here Ernest interrupted him.

It had been already evident to Antony, that the once sanguine, enthusiastic Ernest, had lately lost

his interest in himself, and found it difficult to keep his mind in adherence to his manly determination to meet the future, which was now so contrary to all he had expected it to be, with his wonted cheerful energy. The designs and hopes of years are not so easily or quickly to be cast aside. All this the friend saw and understood, but no other words than those of the past conversation again escaped either of the two upon this subject.

Antony now frequently met Sir Frederick Melville in his cousin's company, and was occasionally flattered by finding himself the object of the Baronet's attention and interest. He had read some of the talented and vigorous papers the deaf youth had given to the public; and Ernest had with pride revealed to him the unknown author. Shortly afterwards, Sir Frederick had requested Antony's attendance at his house in Grosvenor Square, and in a short interview—where the diplomatist, revealing himself in his own character, verified the statement of Ernest, concerning his unusual clear-sightedness and comprehensive intelligence—laid before Antony, with vivid conciseness, a subject which he was desirous should be brought into public notice, and offered a liberal fee for the carrying out of his views by the eloquence of the young author.

It was with mingled pride and bashfulness Antony received the offer; accepted it reverentially from the hand of the Baronet, and with many expressions

of doubt as to his power of performing what was desired, but of willingness and pleasure in undertaking it, and, at less than half the reward proposed, he left the mansion full of a courage which was of itself capable of inspiring him with new power in effecting the desired object.

Late into the night, and long into the morning, toiled Antony at his pleasant task, and the uninteresting duties of his clerkship on the following day were less wearisome than usual, so glorified were they by the halo of that new joy that elated him.

Surely, well-merited compliment is never so gratifying or more beneficial, than when a young, talented, and diffident nature finds itself, for the first time, appreciated by those it honours.

In the course of a few days Antony had laid his paper, (written with the eagle's plume,) before the Baronet—it was highly approved. He received thanks for the service he had rendered, and a cheque for the original sum at first proposed by his employer. Antony thought it the happiest day of his life when he grasped so large a sum of his own earnings. A portion for Kathleen, some also for nurse, must be instantly set apart and forwarded to them by the first opportunity. He hastened to seek out Ernest, placed the valuable paper in his hands, embraced him warmly, thanked him fervently, and declared he owed all to him; and Ernest wrung his hand with that truly English, honest, hearty pressure

which was wanted in him, as he repeated, "God bless you, dear fellow! and may you only obtain all that you deserve."

This little episode left a pleasurable sensation, which hovered in the mind of Antony for some while after it had passed, even though he heard no more from Sir Frederick, and it seemed little likely to repeat itself. He continued writing for the Magazine and one or two other periodicals; and though occasionally annoyed and surprised by the severity of criticism, resolved not to be dispirited.

He thought of what Nina had said—of all her encouragement, and her confidence in him. Yes, Nina was ever in his thoughts! Her form and face ever hovered in his mind; her beautiful eyes seemed ever bent earnestly on him. He never felt alone, for she was with him. In his dark, small office, while he sat poring over the dingy books of figures, reckoning, reckoning incessantly, he felt her presence, and saw her fair fingers saying to him, "Be a man of business, if you would be successful in the world."

When in Ernest's company, too, he felt her presence; while he knew the grieved heart of his friend was endeavouring, by activity and excitement, to banish every thought of her; not daring to indulge in contemplation of that which was so longed for, yet denied; and while Antony sighed to think of this needful estrangement from Ernest's mind of what he had for years, and even now, loved best to cherish,

he could look calmly within himself and dwell the live-long day and night upon the image of her he loved.

But above all, when success, or compliment, or encouragement, beamed on him, she was beautifully present to him; and all pleasure and pride, or the promise of future prosperity, seemed to spring from, to be the result of, her last prophetic words.

“You will become great: you will be, wherever your path leads you, a shining light and a mark of God’s love and favour!”

Could such words ever be forgotten by him? Must he not, would he not, become worthy of them? Could he not realize them? “Yes,” he thought, “and they should help to ennoble all that he is, all that he does, all that he shall ever do.”

He would then struggle against that pining, that hopeless longing, that aching of the heart, which sometimes, indeed frequently, in his contemplation of her, threatened to enervate all his powers. Though her image must dwell with him, his heart must not fly back to her. She had told him it must not; that it must be devoted with all its warmth and energy to the duty before him. She had told him, too, that his infirmity must have no power to daunt him. He would obey her in all. Then, and at length—at length—“rise above this, and all calamity.”

But a dingy, dirty, and dark counting-house, with its ink-stained stools and desks, and iron-barred win-

dows, is hardly a fit place in which to realise poetic and brilliant imaginations ; and as the weary weeks rolled on Antony had again and again recourse to his old friend Patience, to render them otherwise than melancholy to him.

CHAPTER XII.

LLANAWR.—UNEXPECTED CHANGES.

NINA and Kathleen were suitable companions, though of very different natures, and happily did the time pass by for them at Llanawr as each learned to know and appreciate in the other the gentle or powerful qualities that were not common to both.

In Nina's mind was that complicated machinery of thought which is always powerfully in motion, while in her heart rolled ever onwards that ceaseless current of sympathy which is seeking constantly to penetrate to the inward sufferings of others, and bear to the root of their griefs its genial refreshment.

Kathleen possessed judgment which was of valuable quality, though not formed by the efforts of strong, intellectual power, but only by the calm, simple lessons her mind had drawn from the quietude of her past life. She was, too, of a loving, humble, and confiding nature.

The bitterness of her late trial, which she had hitherto struggled to conceal, now found an unexpected alleviation. Nina, with a sister's tenderness, had sought and obtained her confidence, had extracted the sting from her sorrow, and given back instead consolation, cheerfulness, and hope.

"Ah! Nina!" said Kathleen, as they rambled forth together, one early morning, conversing of the past, "I cannot help thinking sometimes that you have been unhappy—very unhappy."

"Why, dear Kate?"

"Because it has not been a forced sympathy you have given me, when we have spoken confidentially together, but a sympathy arising from a certain similitude of feeling—an echo of thought."

Her inquiring look seemed to oblige an answer, and Nina said at length, with cheerfulness,

"Every one must have his trial, you know."

"It is not that I desire to know in what manner you have suffered," continued Kate, "but that I feel ashamed of having spoken to you of myself since you are so reserved towards me. You have told me nothing of yourself."

• "I have nothing I could tell you, Kate!"

"Really nothing?" but Kathleen wound her arm gently round her companion's waist and kissed her cheek, whispering something in her ear.

Nina slightly blushed, and said, half smiling,

"Why should you think so, dear?"

"Because when your family—particularly your father—seemed so anxious you should marry Lord Darcy, you were so distressed at their wishing it. Oh! Nina, how excellent, how noble, must be the one whom you could really love! You could never be mistaken in another; you are so clever, so discriminating, that no character could deceive *you*."

As Nina gave no rejoinder she presently continued, "I have never seen such a one—never known any character worthy of your love. I can only in imagination represent him to myself, for he must be true and generous, and of high education, of thought and feeling, to be suited to be your companion in life; he must be loving and unselfish; in a word—great-hearted and great-minded."

"Your picture is a noble one—vivid, too, as if drawn from life," said Nina, warmly.

"Yes; and I guess, Nina, it is correct, also; a portrait though I know not the original," added the other, smiling.

"An original could hardly be found for such a portrait more than once during a whole life!" murmured Nina.

Kathleen little thought how near that original stood in relationship to herself.

"Oh! but I forgot to include one other important feature," she continued.

"And what is that?"

"He must be of equal, if not of more elevated

rank than yours, dear Nina—this is indispensable to the perfection of the picture. But you look grave; I have distressed you; I have been too bold, too inconsiderate; have I offended you? will you forgive me?”

Nina kissed her playfully. “You have said nothing that could pain me, sweet Kate; but now, where did our conversation begin?”

“With our morning salutation; for we, as well as the rooks above there, have been chattering ever since we rose; and it shall end with the relation of my dream last night, before we are called in to breakfast. I dreamt that my father again embraced me.”

“What had brought him thus forcibly to your mind?”

“I cannot trace the thought to any circumstance; but I saw him more distinctly than I have ever done in my remembrance, where his image has grown faint and scarcely discernible. In my dream, too, that fear of him, which was the effect of his severity, and which as a child separated my heart from him, made me shrink, even, when I fancied he clasped me in his arms.”

The mail-bag had arrived when they re-entered the house, and Kathleen received, as her portion of the contents, a letter from her aunts; and when, on first finding herself alone, she opened it, she was surprised that the envelope inclosed a sealed letter from her father. The contents were startling. She

read them through and through, before she could believe them; and then burst into tears. Thus, weeping, Nina found her.

"I must leave you, Nina; and directly. I must not delay returning to my aunts, for I must leave them—leave England—leave all I love."

"Ah! wherefore?"

"I must cross the sea, and rejoin my father; he is poor—ill—and unhappy. I must set sail immediately, by the next vessel that starts for Jamaica; and, dear Nina, let me whisper it to you, for I cannot at this moment give poor nurse the pain of knowing it, he says that I must part with her; she can no longer remain in our service."

"This is cruel, Kate; and how can you, a gentle and young girl, undertake, unaccompanied, so long a voyage?"

"He has provided for me a protector during it; an old friend of his, whom he has known from childhood—Mr. Ingram, by name—will take charge of me. On this account, my father gives me the address of his abode, in Bristol; where I am to present myself, and place myself in his hands before the departure of the vessel."

"But what can induce him to make this change in your life—to expose you thus to trial, and perhaps danger? Surely, it cannot have been instigated by your step-mother?"

"He does not mention her name. He tells me

he is ruined in fortune, and failing in health; that we must live for one another, and that his poverty obliges him to discharge the faithful nurse. This is the first letter I have received from my father, of any length: or containing expressions of urgent affection. Usually, a few lines, to which our step-mother adds a few more, equally cold and formal, have been all the communication I have had from him. Now look at these!" and the daughter's eyes refilled with tears; and her heart, for the first time, swelled with the new upspringing of filial love to the parent so long estranged from her, as she read the words he had penned.

"My child! my child! My heart yearns to embrace thee. Come to my arms; oh! my daughter. How have I lived so long without thee? Tarry not; let nothing delay thee. Come to thy father's heart; to soothe and bless the last years of a sorrowing life that remain to him. Oh! that I may not die ere I have looked upon thee. I feel—I know that thou art like thine angel mother. Thou wilt look on me tenderly, as she once did. Thou wilt love me."

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CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH INTRODUCES US AND ANTONY TO SEVERAL GREAT MEN,
AND ONE LITTLE ONE.

WHEN December arrived, Ernest was no longer in London; he had resumed his appointed life in Germany. Sir Frederick Melville had returned to town with his family, for the winter; and Antony had again seen him. They had spoken together long and earnestly. The Baronet had disapproved the opinion expressed by Antony on a political subject which had engrossed his own attention. The words of the youth had appeared in a paper universally read; they had been quoted, commended, and had risen triumphantly above the depreciating assaults of criticism.

Sir Frederick, however, was of an opposite opinion; and appeared displeased that he whom he had found useful in furthering his own designs, should venture now to stand forward independently,

and assert views no longer in accordance with his own.

He had met Antony in the street, made him take a seat in his carriage, driven him to his club, and there discussed the point vehemently with him, becoming at the same time surprised and irritated; surprised at the youth's courage and independence of thought—irritated, that with all his modesty and gentle manner, he could yet hold out his own arguments, and make them good, till his opinion appeared to gain, instead of to lose power, by the discussion.

On parting, the Baronet shook hands with him; and Antony was moving slowly away down the street, when he found himself followed by Sir Frederick's servant, and summoned back for the interchange of a few more words.

"It was quite an afterthought," the Baronet said; "but was Mr. Nayton disengaged for this evening?"

The reply was in the affirmative; and the other, taking a card from his card-case, wrote on it an invitation to a party, to be given on the same night, at his own house. It was gladly accepted; Antony understood that the company would include some of the leading men of the day; that the Cabinet Ministers were expected; and Sir Frederick added, that he would have much pleasure in introducing him to Lady Melville. Then, bowing gracefully, he again drove off.

It was, that night, as a dream to the deaf Antony Nayton, to find himself received as a guest in the drawing-rooms of the noble mansion in Grosvenor Square, by a gentleman ranking high in importance in the political world; to stand in the crowded assembly of the rich and powerful, and side by side with men whose genius had won for them the confidence of a nation. Half the evening had already gone without his being recognised by Sir Frederick, who, engaged in quick energetic conversation with several of his guests, passed and repassed him without notice.

Antony could not be surprised that such an one as himself should be forgotten or overlooked in such an assembly, and he was grateful to his host for the kindness which had prompted the invitation, without desiring more.

Lady Melville, who held her little son by the hand, had bowed to him on his entrance, as she had done to many others with whom she appeared unacquainted; but her attention had been frequently turned to him. At length when he again found himself the object of her gaze, he observed she detained her husband as he crossed the room, and spoke with him. The Baronet turned, looked at him thoughtfully, appeared suddenly to recollect him, signed him to approach, and then and there introduced him to his lady. An expression of genuine pleasure and cordiality beamed in her eyes, as she

heard his name, and held forth her hand to him. She nodded and smiled to him, saying, "It is he whom I called my poet," and then moved on towards another guest; but the child she led kept looking wistfully back, his large eyes fixed on Antony. His face was small and pale; illness marked itself unmistakeably on the whole countenance, and the silver ornamented velvet coat which he wore, hung upon but a slight frame and slender limbs, while the projecting forehead and keen earnest eyes, marked a premature development of intellect.

The mother now presented her little son with secret pride and love to a group of friends—he was her only child—but the boy impatiently resisted to her bidding that he should advance, and still turned back to look on Antony.

"Come back, mama. Let us talk to that gentleman, with the dark, quick eyes."

"He cannot talk, my boy. Come on with me. He is, I believe, both deaf and dumb, dear Percy."

"But he can talk, mama; papa is speaking with him now, and he is answering."

"Is it so? well, we will presently think of him; now follow me, sweet child, and give your hand to this gentleman."

"Will you promise me that we shall go soon to him?" he asked, pointing backwards; "I have observed him often to-night, he looks so lonely."

"Yes, yes, only do now as I desire."

He obeyed, therefore, and shortly afterwards Antony found Lady Melville again beside him, and the boy's eyes again bent fixedly on his, while the little hand was slowly lifted and placed within his own.

"Your son honours me greatly," said Antony to the lady, as he pressed the small hand kindly, "and this sweet greeting is more welcome to me from the least person in the room, than it could be from the greatest."

"There, there, mama, he can speak then—you hear him. He is a foreigner, that I can know directly from his pronunciation."

"No, Percy, he speaks thus because he is deaf; if you address him he will not hear."

"What is your name?" asked the child, in a loud voice, and with a slow distinct accent, which was the more legible to him he addressed.

"Antony."

"Antony? not Marc Antony, I suppose. Are you the Roman?"

Antony shook his head. "As much an Englishman as you are," was the answer, accompanied by a laugh.

"Shall I speak louder?" trying to approach nearer to his ear.

Antony explained to him the nature of his mode of understanding speech.

The boy turned to his mother.

"Mr. Antony is cleverer even than Lord Brougham, mama; for though Lord Brougham knows such a number of things, he does not know what one says without hearing one's voice." The mother was greatly amused and interested. She was pleased also at the notice which the child now attracted from a the bystanders.

"Yes, he is, I know very clever, Percy."

"Why did you call him a poet, mama?"

"Because he was the writer of those stories which you love as well as myself. You remember that of poor 'Little Claudis,' which you have made me repeat to you over and over again?"

The child's uplifted eyes were now more full of wonder; he caught his mother's dress, a fit of shyness was coming on, and he would have retreated but for the fascination which the countenance and smile of Antony possessed for him, and which was now again attracting him towards him, with an irresistible spell.

Not long afterwards, Lady Melville had left her little son with Antony, and, as the evening wore on, seated on his knee, his thin, white arm drooping over the young man's shoulder, Percy listened with delight to the low voice that related to him new and more beautiful stories.

The child was in an enchanting paradise, and Antony was scarcely less happy.

They remained thus till the time came for the

delicate Percy to leave the exciting scene and retire to rest. It was now very late, his mother said, and he would be ill if he remained longer. Antony, at his desire, accompanied him out upon the staircase.

"You are like a friend to me already; I feel as if I could tell you my secret." He bent down his little face upon Antony's shoulder to whisper in his ear—the other drew back and shook his head. Percy, remembering his deafness, burst into tears. "You must be so unhappy!" sobbed the child, and would not cease clinging to him till he had promised to come again to see him.

On the following Sunday, therefore, Antony called. The little Percy had watched him crossing the square, and was at the door to meet him, and led him in. Lady Melville, too, was all cordiality. To those whom her child loved, or who loved her child, she could not be indifferent; she had seldom seen him so pleased with any one as he appeared with Antony; she said, that even his cousin Ernest was not such a favourite with him. It was, indeed, a love at first sight, such as a child of sensitive and warm-hearted nature is sometimes capable of experiencing. Antony Nayton's appearance had interested him, his kindness had touched him, and his calamity had aroused his sympathy. "I will some day tell you my secret!" the child said repeatedly to him. He was again invited, for Percy's sake; then again. He

was requested to call whenever he should have leisure; and frequently on such occasions walked with the child in the enclosed gardens of the square, or in the Park. With Lady Melville he had been a favourite, she said, before she knew him personally, and she was always now pleased to be in his company.

To Antony, the hours which he was able to devote to such visits brought a charming enjoyment, and as he plodded on in his daily duties, the remembrance of the little Percy's pretty words and acts, or the anticipation of another meeting in the course of a few days, served to gladden and inspirit him. He already felt tenderly anxious both for the mother and the child. Often when he contemplated the little pallid face and slender form, and thought that he could trace already there the seed of cruel disease, and its too fatal consequence, he would find the mother's eyes bent searchingly upon him, as if to read on his countenance the sad forebodings that rose within.

As the winter thus passed away, there was one circumstance which caused Antony considerable pain and uneasiness. He had in the autumn heard both from Kathleen and her aunts, of her extraordinary summons to Jamaica, but had since received no news of her arrival. The vessel in which she was to have sailed, had, he ascertained, duly arrived, but of her he could learn nothing.

* * * * *

During the ensuing months Antony found himself in frequent contact with Sir Frederick, and occasions offered for his being again of service to him.

One afternoon, Antony and the little Percy, walking together in the enclosure of the square, entered a summer-house, to avoid a shower. Antony was repeating to him a story, already often told, and sitting down, took him upon his knee, as was a custom with him, and continued :—

“ Now the great King of Starland, living in the purple regions that are spangled with sparks, sends down good and kind spirits along the slanting ropes of light, from every star above, down to the gloomy earth, and these bright things light it up. They are, in fact, the great King’s thoughts, which thus people the whole world, as our thoughts people our own minds.”

The child raised his finger to the narrator’s lips.

“ May I just tell you my secret? It is all about these very spirits. Do not tell mama, but I think that these good spirits from Starland, will one day take me back with them, before I can become a man; so I am very much afraid of them. Can you send them away for me?”

“ No, dear child; do not wish to send them away, they are kind, they will not harm you, and if they should carry you to the Starland, it will only be to make a happy angel of you, and make you never have headache or heartache again.”

"Would you like to go, too, Antony? Yes, I know you would, for you have often a sad heartache, that I can tell. Shall I ask them to take you with me?"

"Perhaps the King of Starland thinks it hardly time yet; he will arrange all as is best."

"But what would mama do, when I am away?"

"Follow you, some day, Percy; but who knows but I may be the first there. Happen what may, however, it will be a joyful meeting, when we are all together."

"Your mama is there already, is she not?"

"Yes, my little man; and now come out again into the sunlight, for the clouds are passed," and Antony rose.

"Stay; I want to ask you something more. Do you not think that you may perhaps be able to hear my voice, before I am carried away?"

He shook his head. "Never, never, Percy."

"Not if I beg the King very much to cure your ears?"

"Impossible, sweet child!"

"But you told me that the King could do everything,—everything."

"But this is not his will."

"Did you not tell me he would listen to me if I begged very much? And what do you think, I have asked him already,—very, very often?"

Antony caught the boy in his arms, embraced, and

kissed him eagerly. The tears had started to his eyes.

“Come, Percy, come back to our game of play. Who will win the race this time?” and they ran out together, like children of the same age; but Percy, often as he played muttered the words:

“Pray Heaven, poor Antony may hear my voice before I go away!”

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH FELICITY VILLA IS LEFT FAR BEHIND.

MISS BESS SINGLEVIE said, when Kathleen returned suddenly to Felicity Villa, with the startling news that she must so soon again leave it, that she began to think Kate's father was mad, to summon his young daughter to cross the boundless deep, in so unheard of a manner, just to live stupidly,—neither in fashionable society, nor style of any kind,—in that vulgar place that sugar came from.

Miss Joan said she had always thought him mad, and had always said so, ever since he had been so foolish as to marry.

Miss Bess begged pardon,—she did not mean to throw any doubt upon Joan's veracity, but Joan had certainly never given *that* as her opinion before, and Bess did not believe she had ever thought him mad, till now.

Miss Joan wanted to know what else could a man

be, but insane, to go and fasten upon himself a family, and a couple of wives, one after the other, when he intended ruining them all.

Miss Bess considered his poverty as the result not of his own wilful act, but of some strange vicissitudes, such as are common to man's fortune.

Miss Joan affirmed that if a man could not keep a fortune when he had one, he could not expect to be able to keep wives and children comfortably, and therefore should keep himself out of their way.

Miss Bess thought if he were so poor he would do better to come over to England and live quietly here, than drag poor Kathleen so entirely out of the world, where she stood no chance of settling in life; whereupon,

Miss Joan declared she saw nothing extraordinary in the arrangement he had made for her going to him; that it was not likely a man so full of vanity as she believed him to be would like to show himself in his own country now that he had so empty a purse, even if he had not a wife who liked best to keep him where he is, and who was accustomed to have her own way; and as for Kate losing all chance of "getting settled in life," which she thought was all Bess ever thought of any importance, she had always understood that if girls wanted to get married, they could not do better than go off to India, China, the West Indies, or Van Diemen's Land; that, in fact,

no country was so badly off for marrying men as England itself.

Miss Bess sighed. May it not be probable that that sigh was prompted by the melancholy thought, "Alas! that I have never quitted the shores of my native land?"

In the meanwhile Kathleen was engaged up stairs in the painful duty of giving the message from her father, discharging the faithful nurse from her service. The woman was occupied in her young lady's room unpacking her trunk, when Kate entered and began gently and by degrees to make it known to her.

Nurse continued to employ herself, without pause, as the girl spoke. Once only she started, and her hands trembled visibly as they moved, while Kathleen became more and more agitated, and at length gave way to an outbreak of weeping; she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud. She had never yet been separated from her attendant for an entire day and night. She hardly knew how to live without her; she loved her as a sister, almost as a mother; she trusted in her, leant on her, sought her aid or her advice in all she did, and could hardly bear yet to think of *living* without her, still less of setting out for a long voyage among strangers, to a country so distant and so different from her own, where she knew she would be helpless and unhappy. She thought her heart would break in such a trial, and her grief was

unrestrained. Presently, however, she recovered herself sufficiently to add—nurse being still silent—

“But I am selfish—sadly selfish in grieving thus, because you cannot go with me. I should rather rejoice that you may not be required to undergo the fatigue and trial of so long a voyage, dear nurse; I am young and can endure much, but you, you have been so long in our service.”

There was no reply; and Kathleen could not look into her face. Presently, however, the voice of nurse, altered by emotion and the unusual quickness of her breathing, spoke thus:—

“Never cry, Miss Kate, take heart, put the tears back, we’ll talk about it, and set all aright, Miss Kate;” then, with loud accents, as she threw her arms around her, she continued, passionately, “What, did they think to take me from you, from my child, my darling, from her that I live for? Heaven be praised that I have life and limb to follow you to the world’s end, and I will go; I will never leave you, my pretty child, I will travel by sea or by land, wheresoever you go, and will watch you, serve you, and love you, so long as my old heart has power to beat.”

“But, dear nurse, it cannot be; my father, you understand, nurse, he cannot allow it; I have explained to you, that——”

“Ay, I understand all of it; but, dear heart, do you think your poor father cannot have the service of one

who loves ye as I do, except for *hire*? I am thankful to Heaven, Miss Kate, that during your honoured family's prosperity, and in my younger days, I have laid by enough of my earnings to make me live in comfort for many a year to come."

"Keep that; you must keep all, dear nurse, for your old age; and now, while you have health and strength, you must go where you can add more to it."

"Never fear, my darling, it will last as long as I shall have need of it. Have you not read to me yourself, many a time, how the widow's cruise of oil lasted for a wonderful length of time? Heaven will be mindful of me, as I dare to trust, and my small purse will not become empty, and I shall not live to see the day when I shall be houseless or friendless upon the earth. So, Miss Kate, I will be your servant still, whether you will or not; whether you are rich or poor, and am ready to go now with you across the seas to the distant country."

"I thank you—I thank you from my deep heart, nurse," cried the girl, embracing and kissing her; and your faithful kindness makes me love you, if possible, more than ever; but, indeed, it must not be, your generosity cannot be accepted, my father would not permit me to agree to it."

"Miss Kate, there is another, or, I should say, there was another, whose wishes should be even dearer to you than his. It is for her—for your pre-

cious mother's sake, as well as for my own, that I am determined on accompanying my darling if she travels to the world's end. Think, dear child, could her happy soul ever forgive me if I let ye go forth to such danger all alone?"

Thus nurse would accept no refusal; and when the time came for Kathleen to bid adieu to her tenderly affectionate aunts, and to the quiet home of her childhood, she set out on her mysterious journey with the faithful woman by her side, and with a trusting heart.

The travellers on arriving in Bristol proceeded immediately to seek out the lodging of Mr. Ingram, according to the address which the letter gave, and finding themselves confused by the noise and bustle of the city and their ignorance of its street, it was arranged that the porter who had the charge of their luggage should be their guide. They plodded on through thoroughfares, the dulness and dirt of which is the peculiarity of this city, the gloom pervading the whole atmosphere, and every object forming, to Kathleen's mind, a strong contrast to the more cheerful aspect of those towns with which she was already acquainted.

Window-panes wore the appearance of being never cleaned, houses, of being never painted; heavy vehicles rolled slowly along the muddy streets, heavy, dark-looking human beings made their way heavily along the pavement, their very natures,

thoughts, and aims seemed heavy, as one sought to discern them in their heavy eyes. The air, too, was heavy, and Kathleen's heart became more and more heavy and dejected, as she contemplated these gloomy scenes without, and her own weary anticipations within. But then, pressing again closer to nurse, and clinging to her arm, she remembered how, but for her fidelity, she might now have been lonely indeed. She thought, with some trepidation, of the approaching interview with Mr. Ingram, who was an entire stranger to her, and whose name, even, she had never before heard. The house which they at length reached, stood in the outskirts of the town, in a quiet street, which was narrow and steep. The door of the dwelling, to which they had been directed, was opened by a maid-servant from within, almost as soon as Kathleen and her companion arrived at it. The house was small, a room with one window looking on the street, and a narrow, dark passage leading back to another apartment. and to the little staircase. On the inquiry whether Mr. Ingram resided here, a voice from within replied in the affirmative, and Kathleen entered. Nurse, however, could with difficulty force an ingress, as the servant, placing herself in the doorway, asserted that she had orders to admit only the young lady; and while Kathleen had found her hand quietly taken by the gentleman who stood ready to meet her in the passage, and then led her on into the

back room, nurse continued to assert her determination to enter the house, her impatience increasing with the show of resistance.

The dispute was only terminated by the landlady merging from the small front room, and insisting on the servant admitting "the lady" without a question. Then, as nurse plunged triumphantly into the little passage, the important landlady presented herself before her, inquiring if she were in search of lodgings, as she had to let a most desirable apartment in the third story; and it was with difficulty nurse could rid herself of her importunity by the assurance that she must start in a few hours by a steam-packet bound for America.

In the meanwhile, an unexpected scene had occurred in the room to which Mr. Ingram had conducted the timid Kathleen. The stranger was an elderly gentleman, and apparently, though his hair was already partly grey, and his head stooped forwards, hardly more than sixty years of age. He seemed, however, suffering from some illness or infirmity, for his hand trembled violently as it grasped the wrist of Kathleen, and his face was, as she observed, pallid and thin, as he fixed a pair of small grey eyes eagerly upon her. He closed the door, and led her on towards the window with him.

"And this is Miss Nayton?—Kathleen Nayton?" he faltered out in a voice that trembled as his limbs.

"Yes, sir."

There was a long pause, while he continued his scrutinizing gaze; and she, nervous and frightened, cast her eyes upon the ground. He still held her hand, sometimes drawing it towards him, sometimes pressing it with his own, sometimes seeming to forget it, as he looked into her face.

"Yes, she is like her. I should have known her. She is like her beautiful mother," were his next words.

"You will take me to my father, sir?" she began.

"Yes, certainly, certainly, Miss—Nayton."

"We must, I think, start to-day—soon—is it not so?"

"To-day? yes, yes, dear young lady, certainly, to-day." Then there was another pause, which the stranger occasionally interrupted by a quick laugh, drawing the girl nearer to him.

"And can you tell me something of my father?" she presently asked. "Did you see him, sir, before you left, and was he well?"

He laughed again.

"Yes, yes, I saw him; forgive me, Miss Nayton. I smile—I laugh to look at your pretty face, it is so like hers—so like. Well, sweet Kathleen, I saw your poor father before I sailed. He was ill, and very unhappy. I bring you, from him, his blessing." He clasped both her hands now with increasing

eagerness, and bending forward, kissed her forehead, muttering in a low and agitated voice, "God bless her! God bless her!"

"I am so sorry, my poor father——!" she began.

"He is very lonely, very lonely, too, young lady. Ah! you look wonderingly at me, but he is; he has been for a long while in solitude."

"But my—but his wife, sir, where is she?"

"She—she, Miss—Nayton—in short, fever, severe fever—suffered terribly, in short, fatal."

"Alas! I understand you; he has lost her, and he must be miserable, indeed." The tears started to her eyes as she said again, "My poor father! My poor father!"

It was strange to her, and seemed unnatural, and almost unkind, that Mr. Ingram should continue that short, nervous laugh, while her tears flowed. "My poor father! how grievous it is that weeks must pass before I am by his side."

"It need not be long, it will not be long before he shall clasp you to his heart. He is—he is, Miss Nayton, already in England."

"In England," screamed Kathleen, "oh, joy, joy! can it be true?"

"He is in England, but," and now he spoke low, almost in a whisper, "his arrival is a secret, and no one must know it; he has been, as you are aware, Miss Nayton, unfortunate; he is, alas that I should have to tell it, he is a ruined man; he is in poverty;

he can no longer live in the comfort, or fill the rank he held in his younger days ; therefore,—for though fortune is gone, his proud spirit yet remains, lofty as ever,—therefore, as he must live in poverty, it shall be in obscurity also, and not one who has known him in his happier days shall know him now. Young lady, can you consent to live thus miserably with him ?”

“Listen, listen, nurse,” cried the excited girl to the woman who now entered, “listen to this joyful news ; he is in England, and, Mr. Ingram, you will, you will, in your kindness, take me instantly to him.”

There was no answer, while Kathleen looked eagerly from nurse to Mr. Ingram, watching the wondering countenances of both ; and the stranger, stretching out his uplifted arms, cried, with agitated voice,

“Child, child ! art thou blind ?”

“It is my father——”

“My master,” cried nurse, “it is my master.”

The daughter ran towards him, and was folded in his passionate embrace, as he sobbed aloud,

“My own, own child !”

CHAPTER XV.

NINA.—FURTHER CHANGES AT LLANAWR.

NINA, Nina! what dost thou, sitting there in solitude? why play with those withered lily leaves? Thou hast by thy pencil, and by thy beautiful art, created on that paper before thee a lovely semblance of what that flower once was, with all the polished enamel nature once gave it! why preserve the petals now that all their loveliness is gone? Even thy creative fingers cannot bring back to the flower the beauty which they have given to its portrait, nor can thy breath restore its fragrance.

Let us enter the sanctuary of her thoughts, there to listen to the mournful melodies that resound from the depths of the young and lonely heart.

“Yes, I told him the poor flower was a fit emblem of our affection. And, from the lily of our love, I have drawn out those precious drops—the essence of its perfume, which I will store up within my memory,

so that they sweeten the whole of life for me. Yet the outward form of the dear flower, its freshness, youth and beauty, all are gone; and thus to me, the rapturous delight of loving brings neither joy nor hope. The luxury of my youth, the elasticity of expectation, is all gone, and oh! this is no fancy, no effect of an only imagined influence, it is an actual reality, changing all my life.

“And what are realities? Some men say, life is but a dream; yet life is surely a reality—are they then only dreams? To the eye of the Supreme, perhaps, they are but vain and unreal shadows, but to us they must be more, since they influence the whole of our existence, and touch upon eternity. Yet how quickly do they pass! Like waves in an advancing tide, we hardly recognise their forms ere they have rolled onwards *out of form*, and vanished into the thirsty sands of life, where, however, they have already marked their impress.

“The flame of a lamp is a reality, yet is without substance, apparently too immaterial to belong to earth. And realities are lamps, lighting up the darkness of our inward being; sometimes soon extinguished—sometimes catching fire, and raging on within us, so that when at last—at last burnt out and dead, their ravages remain indelibly marked out upon the soul; but these lamps always, however small, however soon put out, serve to reveal to us some object—perhaps a truth till then unnoticed by us. Thus, I have been

taught the cruel truth, that young and glowing expectations are but lying elves, enticing us away from the quiet garden of childhood, and forth into the world's wide meadow ranges, there leaving us to lose our way, never again to return to the peaceful domain we long to dwell in, once more, and for ever."

And yet, oh, Nina! murmur not that the events of thy little life have taught thee some regretful truths; hast thou not also learned others that take from these their bitterness?

Even now, in thy sorrow, do not forget how, from thy earliest years, each little daily circumstance, though perhaps at first disguised, has eventually revealed itself to thee as a holy messenger, sent for some high purpose, all divine?

Nina has taught others this, and shall she not, in a trusting, calm reliance, find comfort for her own spirit, though tried and torn with pain?

"Patience, patience, child of sorrow!"

* * * * *

"'Farewell!' oh, bitter, bitter word! So little and so short, yet giving endless grief; so cruel—leaving its keen sting to pierce and burn in the deep heart, long, long after the insect-word has flown away!

"Alas! and I have said farewell to him whom only I can admire and love in all this earth; and he has gone forth into the golden world to seek for treasures such as manly souls are born to long and strive for, while I must sit at home inactive, silent, envying

even the instruments of his toil, that they should help him on to triumph. Yes, here I sit in loneliness; and yet I am not here—neither am I alone, for though he knows it not, my spirit follows him, unconscious whither, far into the misty regions of his fate—not seeing, but trusting they are bright to him.

“All is darkness to my heart—oh! I am blind, for I shall never see him more. Blind? nay, not blind, for faith can give light even to the blind.”

Surely the beautiful words of our sweet poetess,* can here give expression to the meditations of Nina.

“I have prayed for thee with deep sobs,
When passion’s course was free;
I have prayed for thee with mute lips,
In the anguish none could see!
They whispered oft, ‘She sleepeth soft,’
But I only prayed for thee.”

“Then I am not blind, and through the night of my ignorance of his fate, I believe, and I see—I *know* that he is blest. Though I should die to-day, and hear with the last fading throb of sense, that he is lost and wretched, my faint soul would still repel the thought, and would go forth to meet eternity smiling with gladness, confident in the certainty that he is for ever safe.”

“What, marry? My mother tells me it is wished that I should marry; what! give away a life without affection—devote an existence where the principle of

* Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

giving or possessing happiness, which is love, is not? I cannot,—will not.

“Alone, I am prepared to wander on, until across the path shall lie the quiet grave.

“Oh, tedious journey, why so long! why, when life has lost its sunlight, will not sleep come down with its soft wings to soothe the wanderer!

“With lagging steps the weeks and years pass by! They talk of the swiftness of time, and the shortness of our life—yes, swift and short it is, compared with the vast greatness of eternity; which, like the fields of ether, where the myriads and myriads of stars dwell, is to our sight, boundless and unfathomable.

“Thus contemplated, existence here is less than as one minute to the longest life of the first patriarchs; yet, if that minute comprehends tears gushing from the wounded heart, and pain and grief in all the weary spirit, then the little breath of time seems sadly long indeed.

“Alone, I stand upon the shore, and look along the tedious path which I must tread alone.

“And yet I will—I will go joyfully forth on my long pilgrimage.

“Thus Keble writes:—

“ ‘Why should we faint and fear to live alone,
Since all alone, so Heaven has willed, we die.’

“Then thus:—

“ ‘Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,
Our hermit spirits dwell and range apart.’

“ And then :—

“ ‘ And well it is for us our God should feel
Alone our secret throbbings ; so our prayer
May readier spring to Heaven, nor spend its zeal
On cloud-born idols of this lower air.

“ ‘ For if one heart in perfect sympathy
Beat with another, answering love for love,
Weak mortals all entranced on earth would lie,
Nor listen to those purer strains above.’

“ On, then, let me pass ; gladly, fearlessly, and
confidingly ; not only with guardian spirits hovering
from above, but accompanied by the band of fellow
souls upon the earth, whom I must love, and learn
to live for.”

So Nina, always willingly and cheerfully occupying her mind for others, and devoting her daily life to those around her, became, as months went by, resigned and calm, even in the secret depths of her heart, and returned to the gay world and its pleasures, its amusements and its companionships, and all its little interests, with a patient and cheerful spirit ; loving and sympathising with others, looking on trustfully to the future, and wearing with dignity and sweet grace, that “ perpetual maidenhood,”* (to use the term of the poet of the affections,) to which she had in her secret thoughts devoted herself.

Thus, at last, she learned to realise in herself those words of the great and good Wilson, teaching that it is best to be “ neither fond of life, nor weary of it.”

* “ In Memoriam,” TENNYSON.

Thus, at last, she felt it would be possible for her to reconcile herself to any destiny which might await her, though still she could not bear to entertain a thought of marriage.

On this subject, Lady Allingworth had frequent conversations with her daughter. On one occasion, they were speaking of the second marriage of a young relative.

"Helen greatly surprises me in this," observed Nina, as she sat working by her mother's side; "she seemed to be so happy in her former husband—surely, one can love but one truly."

Lady Allingworth smiled. "Why so—why not again; and yet again? A tender heart needs so greatly some object to which it may fondly cling, that it cannot live without affection. I can assure you, my dear Nina, that it is very seldom that a first attachment results in marriage."

"Few unions can then be happy."

"On the contrary. I have known many such marriages prove far happier than those consequent on an early attachment. So long as we are very young, our feelings are less under our control, and we think and act more on impulse than in after years; when we are more fit to judge prudently of what can most insure happiness to us."

Nina made no reply, and her mother continued, anxious to turn the subject more in a direction that should assist her present design.

"It is for this reason that the advice of parents or elder relatives, to whom our interests are dear, is so important in guiding our steps when we are young."

"But how can even the tenderest of parents dispose of the affections of their child? How can love be forced by the advice or opinion of others, upon any heart, however dutiful and confiding?"

"My Nina is aware, that it is never my principle *to force* the affections; surely, however, they may be led and placed in a safe direction, especially, if, as in your own case, my love, they have not been already otherwise engaged."

Nina's head bent lower over her embroidery, to hide the heightened colour of her cheek, at this allusion, in which the speaker was quite unconscious of her mistake, and it was not for some moments that Nina ventured to add,

"Then my dear mama believes that warm feelings may be inspired by the will of others, when not resulting from natural inclination?"

"It may be so; I have, indeed, known many marriages contracted without love on the side of one of the parties, in which true and deep love has followed."

"Is it possible?"

"Remember, that kindness begets affection. You could not find constantly yourself in the society of one whose tender regard incites him to repeated acts

of kindness towards you, without becoming touched, softened, melted, and finally, overcome by gratitude, which must change to love."

"And yet," cried Nina, with animation, "it will be impossible for me to give myself away, without first loving."

"Be not too positive, Nina, you do not yet know yourself, if you think this is impossible," said Lady Allingworth gravely; still firmly, though it appeared gently, urging upon her daughter the point on which she knew her husband was unalterably determined.

"Do I not?" murmured Nina, in her agitation snapping asunder the thread with which she worked; but the mother, unconscious of the action or of the emotion which the young girl could with difficulty suppress, observed, with a smile, "Time works unexpected changes."

* * * * *

Yes, time works unexpected changes. Months flew by. The family of the Allingworths appeared again in London, taking their place in the circles of fashion. They had resigned the possession of Llanawr Park; and in its stead an estate newly purchased in Scotland, was to be tenanted by them in the autumn.

Of Kathleen or of Antony Nayton, Nina had heard or seen nothing since they had parted from her at Ponterry, and the recollection of the dear and happy days when this brother and sister had

entwined themselves around her inmost affections, became to her as a sweet dream, almost too beautiful to have been ever true.

But in the midst of gaiety and amusement, an unexpected change came over Nina herself. A fever, from which many then suffered during the unusually sultry summer in the metropolis, made her its victim, and she lay on a bed of sickness for many weeks; the result of which, the alarmed parents awaited in anxiety.

The threatened danger, however, at length, passed away. The fever was baffled in its cruel work, and finally conquered.

Nina rallied unexpectedly, and appeared so suddenly recovering, that hopes were entertained of her being now shortly restored to health. A relapse, however, followed; and when this danger was passed, came further cause for anxiety. As the passion of anger or grief, when gone by, leaves the whole spirit faint and powerless, so there remained, when the disease had departed, an exhaustion and feebleness in the system, from which it was found that ultimate recovery must, even for months, remain doubtful.

At about this time, a paragraph in a fashionable Gazette, announced that "The marriage of Lord D—— (to which allusion had lately been made) with the daughter of a distinguished baronet, was unavoidably postponed."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH THE DISTANCE BETWEEN BROTHER AND SISTER WIDENS.

IN the steep, narrow street, in the environs of Bristol, and in the little dwelling to which we have been already introduced, dwelt the father and daughter, known by the name of Mr. and Miss Ingram, in the strictest privacy.

The good woman, with whom we are also acquainted as Kathleen's nurse, lived under the same roof. She had little expected, when the landlady first requested her inspection of the third-story room, that, instead of establishing herself in the cabin of a steam-packet, she would find it expedient to do so in this same apartment, before that night had set in. But, on finding that Kathleen Nayton was to take up her abode here, nurse did not hesitate to engage the lodging for herself, which would place her in immediate contact with the young lady to whom she desired to devote her affectionate services.

A strangely new life had begun for Kathleen. Her time, her thoughts, and all her energies, were now dedicated entirely to her father; but he was of a sullen, gloomy, and determined temper, and while he grew more and more impatient and aggrieved by his position, she found it more and more difficult to maintain even her own cheerfulness.

In order to preserve the most certain incognito, he would not permit her to have any correspondence with relatives or friends. Even her request for permission to inform her aunts of her being spared the danger of the long voyage which she had expected, was met by a positive refusal.

"Leave the old women alone," he groaned out—"don't you know how such people chatter? They'll confidentially trust their secret to their next neighbour, and the next neighbour to his or her bosom friend, and so all the world will come to know that your poor father has dropped down from the rank of a gentleman almost next to pauperism—that he has not courage to show his face in his own country; I shall have old friends and companions of my better days staring and pointing at me, and they'll whisper and laugh together at the hapless victim of misfortune."

"But to Antony, the dearest and best of brothers, you will allow me to write, dear father—he loves you so tenderly; he will rejoice to know——"

"Tush! tush! child; he cares nothing for his

father. How should he? How can he? Heaven knows, I have never done for him that which might inspire love or dutifulness."

"Indeed, indeed, you do not know him; he is all love, all dutifulness towards you: only let him come here, and if you once see him, you will understand him."

"I tell you to be silent. Try to be less foolish than the rest of your sex. Try to keep a secret, if it be possible for you. What signifies it to the deaf lad scribbling in a counting-house whether his old father lives with you in a town that bears the name of Bristol or Port Royal? Will it help his arithmetic?"

Some months, therefore, elapsed, during which Kathleen had no communication with the members of her family, from whom she was separated. She was then permitted to send a letter to her aunts inclosed in one from her father, informing them of his wife's decease; but she was forbidden to state the truth regarding her present retreat, and could only relate that she was once more with her father, that they lived in retirement, and that the faithful attentions of nurse were their greatest comfort, while she expressed herself truly happy in being able, by devoting her life to her father, to cheer and console him in his loneliness.

And time went wearily, wearily on for the young girl, whose heart, naturally of an affectionate nature,

yearned for the sympathy of the brother and the friend she had learned to love, and felt bitterly the isolation to which her present fate condemned her. Often she looked back to the happy days she had known at Llanawr in Nina's companionship, and almost wished they had never been—so gloomy did the present appear by the contrast. Often she would wander, in thought, away to Antony's side, ponder on all his love and tenderness, and weep bitter tears to think that from that love, and all the joy it had brought her, she was now separated—perhaps for years. Such a sentence she often felt to be cruel; but then, striving to banish murmuring and discontent, she would force herself to chase all thoughts away but those connected with her duty to her father, for whom she felt now a warmth of filial affection she had not known before, and whose occasional outbursts of love and delight in his sweet daughter could not but afford her pleasure.

More than one year had elapsed out of the many which Kathleen was fated to spend thus in ignorance of the lot of her brother, before she obtained leave from her father to inform Antony of their position. He could then no longer resist her earnest and tearful petition; and a letter into which she poured forth all the longings and affections of her spirit, was despatched to the distant brother, communicating to him all which she well knew he longed to know far more even than she to tell.

But, alas ! the letter never reached him to whom it was addressed, and Kathleen had the bitter mortification of receiving it back from the Dead Letter-office. Again and again did she write, but in vain. No reply reached her ; and when she sent a letter of inquiry to the firm in which she believed him to be engaged, the answer from one of the partners informed her, that Antony Nayton had more than a year ago left their employment, and was, they believed, abroad.

* * * * *

Yes, dear readers, Antony was now in the city of Brussels, and in the hôtel occupied by Sir Frederick Melville on the Boulevard ; for Antony Nayton was now acting as private secretary to the Baronet, who being engaged in the diplomacy in Belgium, at a time when our interference was urgently called for in that country, had, before leaving England, proposed to the deaf youth that he should accompany him abroad. Antony had already been frequently of use to him, translating foreign letters, and transcribing papers which were of importance, and Sir Frederick had learned to recognise in him one whose judgment and opinion must be, to him, of the highest value.

But that which had most contributed to engage the volatile attention of Sir Frederick to the deaf youth, after the first stage of their acquaintance, had been the attachment of the little Percy to him, and his daily bringing him to his father's recollection by

frequent allusions to his new friend; while Lady Melville read over again the MSS. she still kept for cousin Ernest, written by "her poet," and pronounced it a sad misapplication of talent, that the writer should be condemned to waste his intelligence in a counting-house.

Antony had found himself, at length, admitted into many confidences by the Baronet; and when, finally, the private secretaryship was offered him, with a liberal salary, his hesitation in accepting an office which he expressed doubts of being able to fill adequately, in consideration of his infirmity, was disregarded, and Sir Frederick would not permit him to decline. Indeed, he was further prevailed upon to accede to the proposal, when Lady Melville wrote thus:—

"My little Percy, is, as you know, Mr. Nayton, sadly ill. One of his greatest pleasures is to be in your company. I may not have many more years in which to contribute to his enjoyment—let him have this gratification. Be as a son in our family—as a brother to my poor child."

Happy Antony! he went home that night to his gloomy cell with a heart brilliant with joy. Gratitude and burning hopes filled his soul. Nina's beautiful prophecies might now, one day, be fulfilled. Nina, Nina! dear name, round which a halo of love ever glowed within his thoughts; how would she rejoice for him at this happy change in his fortune.

What new aspirations sprang up now in his longing heart as he thought of her! What glorious visions! What hopes, such as he had never before known, or never permitted himself to recognise! Oh, delicious hope! Now, indeed, for the first time, he could deeply, truly appreciate her enchantment. Yes, now he would hope—hope to be worthy, not only of loving Nina, but of possessing her! Who could tell but that at length—at length, he would be enabled to attain a position which even she could, without stooping, share with him. He would write to her, tell her all; tell her of his devotion, of his ambition, of his hope!

And he did write that very night; but then tore in pieces the letter when he had reperused it; and judged it too impulsive, too impassioned, and therefore entirely unworthy to be addressed to her.

So he delayed writing yet to her, till he should have reconsidered the actual probability of realising his wishes; and when he reflected that his first duty was to his father, that he must seek him and his beloved sister, of whose fate he was still ignorant, and endeavour to extricate both from a difficulty; and when he remembered how long a period would elapse ere he could hope to obtain a sufficient fortune to enable him to fulfil even these designs, much less to benefit *himself* by his exertions, and thought of the uncertainty with regard to the sentiments of Nina herself towards him, and the probability of her rejection of Ernest

in Lord Darcy's favour, and of her marriage with that nobleman; and, above all, when he considered how unfit his infirmity must ever render him of possessing her, even could he attain to a suitable rank; his enthusiastic desires faded within him, and he recognised there was far more cause for doubt and fear and despondency, than for hope. He desired earnestly to see her once more, and called frequently at Sir William's residence before he left London, but the Allingworth family would not be in town till the following week, and thus, before Nina arrived, Antony had departed.

Thus, it happened that he was now in Brussels with the Melville family, pursuing a new course of life, which was as congenial to him as it had been unexpected. The greater part of the day was spent by him in writing letters, searching histories, studying former important political eras, and bringing past events to bear upon the present, according to the views of the diplomatist; and he had already, by long and severe industry, brought into order the mass of papers and documents which Sir Frederick had never before trusted to any eye but his own, and which, heaped together in confusion, were characteristic of his own careless nature, though not of the stores of ideas within his brain, that according to Ernest's assertion were, although of wonderful variety, arrayed in a still more wonderful order. His leisure time was devoted to the gentle child whose

health appeared, after the first few weeks, to derive benefit from the new scene and atmosphere around him.

Little Percy had now learned the finger language; and those were charming hours when, seated on the knee of Antony, his small fingers told his pretty simple thoughts, or when he listened to the peculiar voice and utterance of the deaf youth, as he related his enchanting stories; or when, in the summer evenings the young invalid, seated in his wheeled-chair, was drawn out into the garden of the hôtel; or between the beautiful trees of the park, to watch the happy and gay crowds passing to and fro, Antony walking by his side, and with his hand in his.

The sad expression of the mother's face would wear the fair garment of a smile, as she saw these two thus occupied with one another.

It is a trait, not only of the heart's amiability, but of a beautiful mind, in a man when he can enjoy the society of a child. He must possess a certain degree of nobleness and superiority of character who is above the petty belief, that in accommodating his own mind to that of a child, he stoops condescendingly. Such a companionship is in truth capable of benefiting him; for how much that is characteristic of the young spirit would, if communicated to him, greatly ornament his own! Again, the simplicity, purity and freshness of the opening intelligence,

cannot be appreciated by any so fully as by the mind already highly cultivated and expanded.

Thus, Antony loved sincerely to be with the little Percy, not only because he knew that he then gave pleasure to the boy, but on account of the actual enjoyment he himself found in his society.

It was as a refreshment to his heart and to his brain; and only when thus occupied could Antony find the relief of lulling the ever urgent longings, fears and regrets that absorbed his whole being.

For he was now suffering more than hitherto the consequences of his deafness. The more he entered into communication with other men, the more sensitive he became to the insurmountable disadvantages under which he laboured on account of it. Few who looked upon the calmly meditative countenance of the young, deaf secretary, could have guessed what passionate sorrows raged within. They had become more than ever painful since he had arrived on the continent.

Although when he had parted from Nina at Ponterry he had expected he should not again see her—for he had felt that when, as the bride of Lord Darcy, she should return to London, he could not have the will or the opportunity to visit her—yet, so long as she remained unmarried, and he was still in England, there was a likelihood, and therefore an undefined hope, that he might meet her once more.

But now that the sea separated them, and he trod the soil of another land, his heart yearned for all he had left—for poor Kathleen, of whom he still heard nothing—for the home of their mother; and it seemed that he was cut off irremediably from all that he loved, and that he looked back to his sister and to Nina, as from beyond the grave. He felt isolated, and at times more than ever despairing; then at other times, unformed hopes, on whose brightness he dared hardly fix his longing sight, hovered before him: but always an aching fear that time would bring about no joy for him, gnawed at his heart.

The little Percy, only, seemed aware that he inwardly suffered, and often Antony would be startled from his reveries when he had believed himself alone, by feeling the hand that clasped his forehead softly stroked by the tiny fingers of the loving child. Then the boy climbing his knees would slowly spell with his hands the words,

“Don’t grieve; you’ll hear my voice some day—won’t you?”

“No—no; alas! never.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

“OH, grief, grief, where wilt thou end? Oh! cruel, cruel ears, shutting out, both from my outward sense and from my inmost soul, all the sweet music of existence. Unhappy ears! blinding me to the beautiful joys that are commonly bestowed upon my fellows; casting me lower in the scale of men, rendering me an imperfect one in the creation, where each thing bears its honourable place! Oh, would that the giant ocean of all sounds roaring through the world, could crush the little barrier separating my thirsty brain from it, and rush within to cool the ceaseless longing!

“Oh, the desolation of this unalterable stillness!

“Torturing silence—blank in my existence!

“Oh, that the same mighty voice that brought in one moment light out of chaos, would utter the miraculous ‘Ephphatha,’ which might change and fill the wide dark void within me!

"Nina, Nina, were it not for this woe I might have called thee *mine*. Rapturous thought! I might have striven not in vain in the rich world for happiness. I might have earned thee by my devotion; but now—alas, alas!

"Oh! that I could once have heard thy voice—once—if but once—then might its melody vibrate through my memory; and to hear it here in my stillness had been perhaps a consolation, or, at least, a maddening joy.

"Now, my mother's pale voice only inhabits my heart, and it grows faint and fainter.

"What doth it say? Patience, Patience. Ah, weary word! would that I could no longer need thee!

"She bids me by patience rise above calamity. Would that I may! but now I am borne down, oppressed, I have no power to rise."

On a fine, sunny afternoon the Melville family, accompanied by Antony, had driven over to the pretty neighbouring village of Lacken, one of the favourite resorts of strangers and sight-seekers. They, as well as some other visitors, had inspected the magnificent palace built by the former sovereign of the country, for the prince who was now no longer heir to the crown of Belgium. They wandered through apartments furnished with truly regal splendour, and now exhibited to the public in the same

order as when the revolution chased the royal inhabitants from their walls. Antony, frequently carrying the little Percy in his arms, when the child grew weary of walking by his mother's side, told to the pleased listener tales of the halls they traversed, of the newly wedded princess, who had been forced to fly from them, during the angry tempest of the insurrection, and who would now never return.

They both noticed that one of the company who, like themselves inspected the palace, followed them as it appeared intentionally. This was an old gentleman whom Antony had frequently before met at the table d'hôte, and in the hôtel garden. He was, on this occasion, often at their side, or at a few paces distance, and more than once addressed some words in English, accompanied by a pleasant smile, to the interesting boy.

Once observing that the child used the finger-language in addressing his companion, on whom the stranger cast frequently keen, inquisitive glances, he again accosted Percy.

"Has the little gentleman yet seen the princess's boudoir?—that must not be forgotten. Am I mistaken, or is your acquaintance afflicted with deafness?"

"Yes! poor Antony, he cannot hear us speak," said Percy, stroking gently the shoulder on which his own arm rested. "Poor Antony—but he will some day, won't he?"

"Nayton, also is his name, I think?"

The child nodded, and then turned away with an exclamation of surprise at the magnificent chamber with golden hangings which they now entered.

The examination of the palace ended, the party proceeded to the beautifully situated cemetery not far distant, which has been called the Père la Chaise of Brussels.

It was a lovely scene here. Flowers adorned many graves, monuments stood nobly lifting themselves into a still, pure air. The sun hung a curtain of gold upon the whole, above which rose the glowing canopy of the deeply blue sky—bluer, and more shadowless and cloudless than ever Antony or Percy had seen in England. Each person in the group was affected by different emotions, as they entered the garden of death.

Lady Melville had become suddenly pale, and pleading fatigue had sat down on the stone steps of the chapel. Her lips quivered as she turned her eager eyes with an expression of indescribable anguish upon her little only son.

He, clinging to her hand with both his own, pressed closer and closer to her, trembling perceptibly as he sat down by her, while her loving arm clasped his waist.

Sir Frederick, conversing with a gentleman of the court who had accompanied him hither, walked away quickly with him, arm in arm, apparently too engrossed in the subject before him to observe

through what a solemn scene they passed. Antony, on whom the mother's melancholy mood and the child's nervous tremor were not lost, touched by their sufferings, and offering a prayer for their consolation, turned away, conscious that it were best they should feel they were unwatched, and slowly wandered to a part of the inclosure where trees waved their thickly leaved arms to and fro over the quiet beds of the dreamless sleepers.

"And when we shall all lie thus silent as the ruined steeple whence the bell has fallen, what will it matter if the peal of the heart rung dirges or happy chimes in the time of its throbbing!"

Thus the deaf man's mind was ever dwelling on thoughts of sound and tone, perhaps expressly on account of the great want he momentarily felt of their realization to his outward sense.

"Ah, Nina! when thou—thou, my own beloved—shalt sleep as these, what will it signify if the name upon the stone above thee be Darcy or another? thy happy or thy sad life will be alike gone by. Ah, Antony! what will it signify when thou too art no longer chained to this existence, that the years gone were clouded with the pain of an ever-aching heart. Patience, then, patience! Time brings—oh, if not relief, at length rest—rest."

The soft air brought the fragrance of flowers from the grave parterres. Antony was affected by the perfume so grateful to his acute sense; it was an

enchantment to him, which, with all he saw around, contributed a tranquillizing influence. He became calmer.

Peasant women moved hither and thither, some bringing flowers, with which to ornament the graves of friends or relatives; some kneeling by the cross they had already hung about with their garlands, dropping bead after bead of their rosaries, as they muttered prayers; others weeping bitterly by newly-formed beds, thus relieving the pangs of newly-given heart wounds.

Antony, turning at length to meet the odoriferous breath that sailed by, kissing his cheek, found himself suddenly face to face again with the gentleman stranger who had addressed Percy in the palace. He was leaning against a linden-tree, in a thoughtful attitude, looking intently at Antony. He had removed his hat from his head; it might have been from a sense of the solemnity of the scene around him, or it might have been only to enjoy the cool play of the air upon his head. Thus the bare and white forehead, with the silver hair that encircled it, shone in the sunlight that played on it through the boughs; a mild, blue eye gazed out with an honest gravity from beneath the snowy eyebrows, and, with the rest of the features, marked him unmistakeably an Englishman. There was, at the same time, an expression of care upon the brow, and in the twitch-

ing of the mouth, which seldom entirely passed away, even when he smiled.

Antony instinctively bowed, and was about to pass by, when the stranger advanced, making signs that he would address him; then, drawing out his pocket-book, tore a page from it, on which he wrote, and presented it to Antony. It expressed, that, as he had been informed the young gentleman bore the name of Antony Nayton, the stranger desired to know if he were indeed the son of, or related to, one who had been the friend of his youth. Questions and inquiries followed, which rendered the stranger more and more interesting to Antony, since he discovered he had indeed been intimately acquainted with his father, and had even seen his mother, on one occasion, shortly before her untimely death. Their conversation became animated, and the stranger was soon acquainted with the outline of Antony's past quiet life, and his present prospects.

With Sir William Allingworth it appeared he was also on friendly terms, though they had not recently met. He gave his own name as Smith, and said he was now travelling through various countries, desirous to dispel from his mind the effects of a late calamity.

* * * * *

The beauty of the scene in the cemetery had not been without a beneficial effect upon the mother

and the child, who, with the footsteps of death marked out so numerous before them, had, as if instinctively, clung closer than ever to one another, in dread of the terrible separation which threatened them. She saw that the boy felt and understood it as fully as herself. At length, however, the rich prospect; the joyful songs of birds; the luxuriance of flowers; the holy calm reigning on all, made this garden, to them, as that of Eden. Death seemed no longer alarming to the child.

"Mama," he began presently, "the people here must sleep very happily, I should think. Whenever it happens that I shall go to sleep in the same way, how I should like to lie among all this sunshine and flowers! Would not you, mama?"

"Ah, sweet child; if you and I could only lie here *together*, Percy! It is, indeed, quite a beautiful place."

"Not like those dark caves under the churches, where they put them in London, so that a crowd of people tread upon one's bed every Sunday, and even more often." The child shuddered, involuntarily. "Those places must be so cold—so cold. When I am at church, and think of those horrible rooms underneath, and see all those melancholy grave-stones fastened over the walls, I think the church a miserable place, and long to go away, mama."

"But when we are at church, Percy, we must not

think of the grave-stones ; our thoughts must be employed then very differently."

"But, mama, why do people put them there, if we are not to think about them?"

"Is it not well, Percy, for those who have been good and holy in life, to have their names afterwards recorded in this holy place?"

"But did not you tell me, no one can be really good but God, and that this is His own house?"

"True, my child."

"Besides, mama, all the people who have monuments cannot be the best people, can they? for, do you remember what a beautiful large statue and marble tomb was put up last winter, in our church, to Mr. —; and everybody had said when he was alive, that he was quite a bad man?"

And now, willing to dismiss the subject, Lady Melville, without reply, observed: "See, Percy, how happily the butterflies fly around us."

"Ah, yes—Antony told me something beautiful about the butterfly. I will run with them to those rose-bushes. I am stronger to-day, mama—I can run."

"Do you, indeed, feel better, my child?"

"Better, mama, than I have felt for many weeks."

He glanced up to her quickly, to catch the smile which he knew well he had summoned to her lips ; and it was a beautiful smile, for the eye glistened,

and the cheek became suddenly tinged with an unwonted glow—the glow of hope. Then he ran on, trying to keep pace in swiftness with the flight of the butterfly above his head. His mother followed, with lighter step than usual now, and took his hand, as she reached him by the rose-bushes.

“Oh, mama, what a pretty little grave!” he exclaimed, with unaffected glee, for it was on a child’s bed the rose-bush blossomed; but he did not turn his small face up to hers now—he felt that it must tell her silently what he would fain she should not know, that his boast of health had been followed by inward pain, so that he could not move.

“There is Antony,” he cried suddenly, as with pleasure he saw him approach, Mr. Smith by his side; the boy beckoned to him, and he hastened forwards to lift him in his arms.

“I have something I must say to Antony, mama. I must tell it him directly,” he said, as he clung affectionately to the kind arms that encircled him.

So they went on together.

When the pain was gone, Percy again expressed that he felt better than usual, but his conversation with Antony had left him thoughtful.

* * * *

Antony now found himself frequently in the company of Mr. Smith. The old gentleman seemed

pleased to be by his side when he was not occupied by business, and though they seldom addressed one another, for Mr. Smith was fully as silent a man as the deaf youth, yet he appeared to find a quiet amusement in strolling along with him in his early morning rambles, or standing near him in the garden where the company of the hôtel met in the evening, and the tables being moved into the open air they partook of coffee, wine, and fruits together.

On one occasion he prevailed on him to accompany him to the Chamber of Representatives, where the first political leaders in Belgium spoke. Here, he could witness the effect of eloquence as it poured forth from the lips of the celebrated Rodenbach upon a crowded audience. But that which mostly interested him, was to contemplate the countenance of the physician's brother, Alexander Rodenbach, whose perfect blindness gave a wonderful stillness to his features, while a placid dignity pervaded his whole appearance, and the deaf one could trace the brilliant vivacity of the inward spirit breathed forth in speech, only on the faces of his eager listeners.

This spectacle had a beneficial influence upon Antony.

"And this is a man who has risen above his calamity," thought he, "and he is afflicted with blindness. Thank Heaven, that I have the blessing of sight. And this man is reconciled to his misfor-

tune; he looks it calmly in the face. Surely no mind can be truly great that cannot do this, and his calamity is indeed far greater than mine. Who would not rather be deaf than shut out from the sunlight of heaven, and from the sunlight of human countenances. I should deserve to lose this sense also, could I again repine at my own lot."

The literary work of Alexander Rodenbach, entitled, "*Coup d'œil d'un Aveugle sur les Sourds-muets*," was placed in the hands of Antony by Mr. Smith, and highly increased his interest in the writer.

Antony pressed the hand of the kind old gentleman with reverence, but with a warmth which was unusual with him, after this circumstance, as he said, with modesty,

"You have done me a lasting benefit, sir, you have taught me that which I hope never to forget, and I thank you heartily."

* * * * *

The hope which had been entertained that the little Percy's health was changing for the better, presently received a sudden check. It appeared that the feeling of renewed strength had been only as the last effort of the failing constitution. He was ordered by the physicians to be transported to Spa, as it was imagined the chalybeate waters might effect a beneficial change; and Sir Frederick Melville, now at length

awakened to the danger, and entirely absorbed in his hopes and fears for his only child, hurried thither with Lady Melville and Antony, in whose arms the sick child loved best to rest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ADIEU TO MANY OF OUR FRIENDS.—THE SECOND ACT CLOSES.

It is a beautiful little journey from Brussels to the small, but far-famed village of Spa, which lies nestled in the ancient arms of the giant forest of Ardennes, and it was performed in safety for the invalid, who looked out upon the variegated scenes through which they passed with passive pleasure. To Percy, the drive from Liege—the city of manufactures, where the rattling of the carriage through the ancient streets, and all the dinning sounds of a busy city, had affected his nerves painfully; to Percy, the drive along the picturesque banks of the Vesdre, among vineyards, orchards, elegant villas, and rugged hills, leading him far away as it seemed from the turmoil of busy men, gave a calm enjoyment. But there was evidently an anxiety within, a burden upon the little mind, which no outward amusement could dispel. The earnest eyes, enlarged latterly, and more bril-

liantly clear than ever, since the pale cheek had become so sadly paler, were often turned upon the watchful mother as they drove along, with an uneasy expression, and more than once, he asked eagerly :

“Mama, will Ernest indeed come to us? Did you send him my message?”

The answer was always in the affirmative, for so urgent had Percy lately become to see his cousin, that Sir Frederick, as well as the mother, had presingly requested Ernest, who was still at Leyden, to join them without fail at Spa, within a few days.

And Ernest accordingly arrived there shortly, and the child had a long conversation with him alone, which it afterwards appeared had relieved his anxiety.

The waters were tried, but apparently without any beneficial result. The disease seemed now indeed to gain ground so rapidly that it was believed life could linger but a short time longer within the exhausted frame.

The two friends, Ernest and Antony, rejoiced to be again together; they both found each other in some degree changed since they had last parted. In Ernest there was more of that carelessness regarding himself which Antony had then observed, and somewhat less of the eager and impulsive vehemence which had formerly been his characteristic. In his friend, there was more matured manliness, more cultivation of manner, more self-possession, and a certain grace

which approached almost to dignity, in his deportment, though his natural modesty distinguished him as much as ever.

Frequently, during their residence at Spa, Antony had returned to Brussels on business for the Baronet, hurrying back the following day to the anxious family.

On one occasion he was again to visit the city, but this time would, it was expected, be absent for several days. Ernest was to accompany him.

They stood together by the little couch of the sufferer to take their leave of him, and the child looked upon them with a smile of ecstatic gladness. Antony bent over him, his countenance agitated by a strong and unwonted emotion, which it appeared difficult for him to restrain. His eyes were dimmed with the gushing tears, and his lip quivered.

"You will soon return, Antony?"

"Heaven only knows if ever I shall return."

"You will, I know it. Oh, thank you, thank you, dear Antony, for the kindness of your promise. I am so grateful to you; I know you will perform it."

"I obey your desire, my boy, as I would obey the voice of an angel: and yet I doubt fearfully if I am right in this. May God bless you, Percy, and forgive me if I sin against him."

"Good-bye, dear Antony, for a few days; we shall soon meet again."

"Yes, and indeed it may be in another place than here."

"No, I shall wait here till you come back to me; I know it," and the child glanced heavenwards.

"Cousin Ernest, you will bring him home?"

Ernest nodded, kissed his farewell, and, grasping strongly the arm of Antony, who, still irresolute, would not leave the child, he drew him powerfully away.

* * * * *

In the "Place Royale," the largest and finest square in the city of Brussels, let us now observe Antony and Ernest. They walked quickly along side by side without speaking, Ernest wrapt in thought, apparently contemplating some important design on which he was bent. The other, on the contrary, was evidently under strong excitement; his cheek was flushed; from the black orbs of his eyes darted flashing light; his compressed lips at one moment expressed a strong resolution, at the next moved to and fro uneasily; at another were curved into a smile, according to the variety of thoughts that by turns occupied his spirit. His step was light and quick, as if urged by an unwonted impatience from within; and yet he seemed half unconscious of where he was, or whither he was bound, for Ernest held his arm to guide him aright. As they crossed the "Place," Mr. Smith recognising Antony,

accosted him by a hearty shake of the hand, and made known to him that he was the more fortunate in thus meeting him, as he was on the point of leaving Brussels, and was glad to see him once more. He even besought him, together with his companion, to give him a few moments of his society in his hôtel, and as the Boulevard lay in the direction of their route the three passed on together. To Ernest the good English gentleman was already known from the accounts Antony had given him of his father's friend, and of their strange meeting in the cemetery; so that he conversed willingly with Mr. Smith as they walked, for Antony was still wrapt in himself. As they approached the hôtel a travelling carriage and four stood before the door; the servants had fixed the imperials on its roof, and the footman let down the steps.

"An English chariot that, sir," observed Mr. Smith to Ernest. "One would recognise it anywhere. The equipage also could not be mistaken."

Ernest assented, remarking that the livery was not unknown to him, though at the moment he forgot the name of the owner.

"Darcy!" said Mr. Smith. "The young nobleman has been spending a couple of days with his bride at my hôtel."

"His bride?" cried Ernest, involuntarily.

"Yes; indeed a charming young lady, a daughter of one whose friendship I have the honour of claim-

ing; one who is I believe known to our friend Nayton also. She was Miss Allingworth. The bridal pair are now off for Aix-la-Chapelle, and this is the wedding trip."

Ernest's countenance became suddenly clouded with indignation. His tightened grasp roused Antony's attention. Then his fingers flashed with the few words.

"See, Nina, Lady Darcy—there," as he pointed to the vehicle, on the sides of which shone the well known Darcy arms and crest.

At this moment a crowding of domestics at the door announced that the nobleman and his lady would shortly appear. The eyes of the companions were strained eagerly towards the portico. Lord Darcy came out; they could discern his face as he handed the bride swiftly to the chariot; she entered it; the nobleman followed; the steps were raised, the door closed, and the horses sprang forwards. The carriage dashed by, passing closely before the young men.

And now Mr. Smith, reminding his startled companions of their promised visit to his own apartments, urged them to enter the hôtel. Ernest, however, who only by a vehement effort could conceal his indignant emotions, excused himself hastily, and requesting that Antony would presently follow to the place of rendezvous, hurried away.

And Antony!—As Mr. Smith now turned towards

him, he perceived a strange alteration in his countenance. The flush had left his cheek and was succeeded by a livid pallor which gradually overspread the lips also. He seemed regardless of where he stood, or of what passed round him. His eye, now dull and leaden, looked at vacancy. His companion taking his arm led him within, he yielding like a child, till they reached the apartment of Mr. Smith, who closed the door, and let fall the powerless hand.

"And it was Nina!" were the words that, in a half whisper, escaped his lips. Then he leant back against the wall, breathing with difficulty. The heart that had but a few moments previously throbbed within him so warmly, so powerfully, now sank low and faint. He could hardly think or feel; his heart was stunned by a sudden blow. He had no recollection of any person or thing, save Nina; and her name, it seemed to him, was being now torn by cruel hands from his deepest soul. "It was then past—that wild imagination—that hope—that un-earthly dream. Well, let it pass; it was but a madness. And, oh! must Nina—with it—pass from the heart also?" A groan burst from him.

Mr. Smith had a tear in his eye as he occupied himself in seeking wine, and pouring it out for his friend. Was it that he read the truth of the whole tale in the few words the unhappy Antony had permitted to escape him—"And it was Nina?"

He laid his hand gently on his shoulder, and

Antony started—was roused; covered his brow with his hand for some moments, and, when he looked up, he was himself again.

“You are ill, my young friend.”

“For the moment, kind sir; but it is past. I have been, perhaps, a little fatigued; but you will excuse me.”

The pale face of Percy again rose up before his mind, reminding him of the promise he had made him.

“And I have yet something to go through,” he added.

The wine, so considerably provided, was refused, but with many thanks; and when, presently, he was about to quit the good-natured friend, he took of him an affectionate farewell.

As he approached the door, a sudden recollection of what he was about to do, thrilled through the whole highly sensitive frame.

He returned, and lifting the wine to his lips, dregged the cup to the last drop. “For thy sake, Percy; not for my own—not for my own. Now, I am, indeed, ready for even a perilous battle,” he said; kissed his hand to the other, and hastened away.

His step became less swift, as he drew near to the appointed place of meeting, but it was not less firm and resolute; and when, arriving at the house he sought, he awaited for admittance, the thought that

filled his brain was, "Oh! that madness—that agonizing madness—may be averted from me."

Oh! Antony; be not rash; beware how thou enterest that mysterious dwelling. Evil, indeed, may be the fate awaiting thee there!

See, the door opens; held ajar by a stranger, a dark-looking and ill-dressed man. Antony delivers his name. The stranger nods, and signs to him to enter; and Antony, with a bold tread, steps within.

Farewell, then! farewell, to thee, Antony; our dear, deaf friend!

And let us here close the second act of our tale.

Patience, yet awhile, readers; the third will not be a long one.

Part III.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH FINDS OUR DRAMATIS PERSONÆ SIX YEARS OLDER.—
FATHER AND DAUGHTER.—A NEW ALARM.

LET the first of the world's dramatists help us in commencing our new act.

Let the first of the world's poets open for us the last great division of the Prose Life-Poem, which we are now contemplating.

"I now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings ; impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage that I slide
Over six years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap."

"Your patience this allowing,
I turn my glass ; and give my scene such growing
As you had slept between."

Yes ; six years, dear readers, you must imagine past, in the turning of the leaf that separates this chapter from the last.

Six years ; how replete with events of all variety

must such a period prove to the sons of men ! what diversity of faces also does it possess—turning to each individual a different one. To some, a frowning, to others, a smiling face : to some, features of constantly changing expression ; to others, only a monotonous countenance.

To Kathleen Nayton, this period of time had been only of the latter description. Week after week—month after month—year after year—had brought no event to brighten, or to change the quietude, of her sequestered life.

Mr. and Miss Ingram continued to tenant the small house of the narrow and hilly street, where we, in our imaginations, last beheld them.

On the girl, time had left little trace, save that it had moulded her into a beautifully formed and lovely-minded woman. While on her father it had latterly made this change, that he had become, more and more, the victim of disease. He was not yet an old man, and yet he appeared and felt infirm.

The disappointments of his life, the humiliating vicissitude of his fate, with all his many, unceasing regrets, as he contemplated the latter dark periods of his existence, had left impressions on his health and spirits which were silently working their fatal effects upon his frame.

The years he had spent with his daughter had been indeed sadly

“ Roughened by those cataracts and breaks,
That humour interposed too often makes.”

She knew well that his moroseness of temper, as well perhaps as his failing health, was attributable to the dejection of mind that misfortune had brought upon him, and she pitied and bore with it the more tenderly. His temper had evidently also been soured by its contact with the passionate nature of his wife, of whom he constantly spoke, reverting to her whims and ungovernable caprices with embittered feelings. He was frequently repeating to his Kate,—whom in the intervals of his murmuring or peevish humours, he would caress and fondle—tales of the bygone times, when “the hard woman” held her dominion over him.

“She treated me like a child, would not let me do what I would, even with my own. She would not let me love even my children. I dared not write to them, dared not send for them to live and grow up with me. Even my brave Augustus she forbade me to see, or he should never have left my side. She hated him, I believe, almost as much as that deaf one. I believe that she hated all the world,—save, perhaps, her husband,” and here he chuckled, smiled, and then continued his mutterings. “Yes, I think she cared for *me*; though she was severe, she did not mean to make me unhappy. I did not then know that I was so miserable, for I loved her, and she me. Severity was her nature, she could not help it. I understand it, now; it was because she loved me, and could not bear I should love any but herself, that she kept you all, my children, from me. Well,

well, I can perhaps forgive her, for she did love me ; yes, she was fond, very fond, of me."

Thus he would sit, day after day, in their small ill-furnished apartment, repeating, again and again, the same thoughts and words, while Kathleen was by his side, working busily ; for she had now long since become accustomed to the finger-labour which was required of her, in their reduced condition, as well as to the deprivations and extreme economy to which they were forced to accommodate themselves.

And when she would remind him, on his mention of the severity of his wife, that he had often said that in her last illness she had been touchingly affectionate towards him, he would again chuckle and smile, as he began again the often-told tale. "Ha ! yes, yes, she was sorry at last,—quite penitent at last—and prayed me to forget her evil temper and passions, promising when she should be in health again, to be as gentle with me—as gentle as thy mother, Kate ; but," and he laughed in his low, strange way, "she could not help her humours, she had told me the same in former illnesses, and when she was well again, she would be as stormy again as a March day. It was in her blood, she could not rid herself of it."

"Yet she loved you," Kate would then intercedingly interpose, "and you did forgive all her hasty words, father, from your heart !"

"I was as weak as a child,—fondled and kissed her, remembered the first days of our married life,

and prayed Heaven to spare her to me; and when they told me she was gone, I wept, and thought my heart would break! Yes, yes, 'twas a terrible time; 'twas a woful bereavement to me. I wished to have followed her,—my dear, dear wife! and I wish it now. Ah! would that I were now with her! We had lived latterly principally on her little money; when that went with her, what could I do, but come to my child, and share my poverty with her?"

"And thus make your child happy," would be the reply.

But as the years passed, he became more weary of their monotony, and of the humble manner of their life, than even the young girl. He moped and pined for luxuries and even necessities, which they had no means of procuring. He could have no society to interest and amuse him, as in former days, and he dwelt on the happy times of his prosperity with a feverish pleasure, which, when it was past, left his mind only the more gloomy and dejected. He had no refreshment of thought, and Kathleen found it difficult to impart to him that with which her youthfulness supplied her own mind.

He gradually became more and more ailing, and nurse felt anxious and alarmed for the master whom she had so long and patiently served, before his daughter permitted herself to believe that there was any cause for fear. He became also more morose, and more difficult to amuse, and his former affec-

tionate playfulness with Kate now gave way to frequent reproaches on himself, for condemning her thus to waste her youth, and loveliness, and love, upon an infirm parent, who must live and die in poverty. Frequently he urged her, and once commanded her, to return to her aunts, to permit herself to enter somewhat into society, from which he had so long banished her, and to leave him alone to his own gloomy tempers ; but she rejected the proposition with an affectionate firmness which he found irresistible, and declared she was only happy by his side.

He could now take but little daily exercise, and leaning on her arm, strolled out, only slowly, and for a short while. Then the whole day would pass in lying back in his arm-chair, while Kate read to him such books as she could from time to time afford to procure, from a circulating library. Their meals, which nurse always shared with them, were to him usually a subject for murmuring, since their fare could be only of the most frugal kind ; and it was but now and then that Kathleen was able to procure for him such delicacies as, in former times, he had enjoyed daily. The evenings he would spend in drowsiness, speaking only at times, and then words of murmuring or complaint at his bodily sufferings, while his daughter and the good nurse sat together, and laboured untiringly with the needle.

At length so severe an attack of illness came on,

that he was confined to his own chamber, and then to his bed, but he remained obstinate in his refusal to call in medical advice. He would not be alarmed for himself; he often expressed his conviction that the illness would not become severe, that it would not prove fatal, and that he should live probably to an advanced age, as his father and many of his family had, before him; but he said it with regret, and would sometimes turn, with tears in his eyes, to Kathleen, and laying his thin hand on hers, would repeat, "I grieve to think it, for your sake, child, whom death would indeed befriend, by taking me."

His spirits became so depressed, that it appeared to his anxious watchers he was at times unbearable, even to himself. His bodily sufferings, too, increased, so that he at length permitted an apothecary, whose customers they had frequently been, to be consulted.

The disease, however, did not yield, and yet the invalid continued to complain that he feared it would not be fatal.

One night, Kate had sat watching by his side for many hours, during which he was restless and groaning. She sat thinking of the strange contrast of the present, with the days when she had been blessed with the love of her brother. She thought of him, of the dear and generous Antony, wondering if he were indeed long since dead, or whither he had wandered in the great wide world, and why he had never received or never replied to the many letters

she had written from time to time. She was wishing and longing that Antony could behold the face of their poor father, and give comfort and joy to his sad heart before he should sink into the grave; and the tears started to her eyes as the painful thought awoke in her mind, "I may never, never, see him more."

At length the invalid, starting up, desired her to leave him and to go to bed, for he said he could not sleep while she sat there. She rose reluctantly. There was a strange vehemence in his look as he watched her light the rushlight at the foot of the bed, and move away to her own room, adjoining his, leaving the door ajar, that no sound from within might escape her eager ear. Hers was a tiny room, slightly and plainly furnished. The deal table, uncarpeted floor, and uncurtained bed, with its patchwork counterpane, seemed little in accordance with the delicate and graceful elegance of the young Kathleen. On the window-shelf were two or three geranium plants, and a small rose-shrub, whose refreshing green leaves were the only ornaments of the apartment; save that, on the otherwise bare walls, two pictures were fixed; one, a sketch of a beautiful female head, had sprung from the pencil of him she so earnestly loved. It was a portrait—and of Nina! The other was a little landscape her gentle friend had drawn for her years ago, of a well-remembered scene in Wales.

Her tears flowed fast, as she glanced from the one

to the other; but her gaze was longest fixed on the portrait.

"It is to me as if both Nina and Antony were united in that dear picture; and neither of them shall I, perhaps, ever behold more. I am weary now of hoping, I can no longer trust to hope. Ah! Antony spoke truly when he said that Patience was far better. Alas, my poor father! I must pray that Patience may be also given to thee."

She knelt down, nervous and weary, and stretched out her white arms upon the bed, with fingers clasped together. And when she rose, more calm,—

*"Her gentle limbs she did undress,
And laid down in her loveliness."*

But hardly had the first thin veil of sleep drooped over her senses, when she started up; for her ear had even then caught a slight sound in the adjoining room. She thought then, that the sick man had only turned restlessly in his bed. But she could not again compose herself to sleep; and, filled with an undefined anxiety, she partly dressed herself, and sat down, leaning her head upon her hand, and silently listening.

Presently, the creaking of the bed again caught her attention; then a slight rustling. She sprang to the door, and entered. Her father was standing by the table. Startled by her entrance, he let fall a razor from his hand, and gazed angrily upon her, as he muttered several successive oaths.

She was indescribably terrified, and trembled in every limb; but, endowed with a sudden presence of mind, she mastered her agitation, and advanced quietly towards him.

"My dearest father!" she said, "what, still restless to-night? Yes, that look tells me you are sadly ill. The room is hot, let me throw open the window. There; and, indeed, your brow throbs, let me cool it for you;" and, dipping her handkerchief in water, she bathed his temples, he yielding gently as a child; then she took the arm that hung listlessly downwards, placed it in hers, and besought him to lean on her as she walked gently with him up and down the chamber.

He was silent, sullen, and obedient; and Kate, while she spoke cheerfully on various subjects that might amuse his mind, and turn it from its fearful purpose, watched anxiously for the unnatural fire of his eye to die away. Then, at length, thinking him weary and more calm, persuaded him to lie down again and try to sleep.

She sat beside him again, listening to every breath and motion, while she shuddered, and grew faint and cold with horror at the scene she had witnessed. Fears and suspicions she had never known before rose frightfully before her, making the blood recoil from her heart.

Thus contemplating the terrible picture of the mind of the unhappy man, she sat by the bedside

long—long watching him, in silence—he, too, was silent, but she knew he did not sleep. As the next hour slowly passed, she was apprised of his wakefulness by the occasional groans and mutterings which he could not suppress.

Oh! how long seemed the tedious night—how solemn and how mysterious! The dim flame of the rushlight flickered to and fro as a cool breath down the chimney impelled it, and as it waved, it moved the shadowy outlines of the bed-drapery, so that, to the excited mind, they wore the semblance of many strange and varied forms.

What wonder that she shivered with an almost superstitious awe, as if spirits of evil hovered there to keep awake the frenzied mind of him who lay stretched before her?

Oh! this silence—this dumb expectancy of some unknown coming evil—was terrible to bear! How she longed for day! Day, with its glorious glare to startle evil deeds and evil thoughts away from the earth—day, to sweep, like river's torrent, from the air, the impurity of its blackness—to give form and colour and reality to things as well as thoughts, which the mind's staring eye can only see as shadowy shapes of its own conjuring, during the solemn night—day, to chase away the hideous visions created by uncertainty and suspicion, to wake up slumberers, and bring to the lonely watcher sympathy and help and

love—day, to look upon the world, and in that look give light, as God, in beholding man, gives blessing. Oh! day, why dost thou tarry?

And at last it came, changing the huge vest of Heaven from grey to crimson, and sending forth bright clouds of all imaginable forms and hues, as poets give forth their beautiful and glowing fantasies, to cheer and delight all wakeful gloomy hearts.

Cheering was it, indeed, to Kathleen, for she now perceived that the sufferer did indeed sleep.

Nurse was presently at her side, and she, rising softly and stealing into her own little chamber, but still not daring to lose sight of him, told in a low whisper the horrors of the night.

* * * * *

At nine o'clock Kathleen, somewhat refreshed by an hour's repose, following the advice of nurse, left the faithful woman to watch her still sleeping father, and set out to the apothecary's shop, as she was anxious to speak with him, and bring back a composing draught. Nurse was glad that the excited Kate should breathe the clear morning air, and have the refreshment of change of scene, after the anxiety she had suffered; and Kate, whose nerves were overstrained, felt an indescribable relief in finding herself no longer in the presence of one whom she felt had, in a measure, lost command over his reason.

She entered the shop, and requested that she

might speak with the master alone. A customer was already there, who, as she spoke, looked quickly round; gazing on her with an expression of surprise.

She was ushered into an inner room, and as she passed the gentleman, though her eyes glanced upon him, she appeared not to notice his presence, for her look was that of one whose attention is fixed only on the inner thoughts, when the mind hangs a film between the eyes and all outward objects.

The gentleman, however, had evidently expected a recognition, and seemed again surprised. He watched her as she entered the adjoining room.

"I must be mistaken, and she did not know me, and yet——" he turned to the shopman, and inquired the name of the young lady; for that she was a *lady*, notwithstanding the common material of the dress she wore, was sufficiently indicated in her voice, her step, and every movement.

"Miss Ingram, sir."

"Ingram! Impossible! Mrs. Ingram, do you mean?"

"No, sir. Miss Ingram lives with her father in — street. The poor old gentleman has been long ill. My master attends him, and they are very poor folks, so you know, sir, cannot afford *physician's fees*, sir," was the answer, with a smile.

The inquirer sat down till the door opened, and she again appeared. Her eyes were cast thoughtfully down as she crossed the shop to the street-door,

then stopped, and returning a few paces, inquired how soon she should send for the other medicine. The reply was, that in half-an-hour it should be ready, and she turned and hurried away. She knew not that she was watched and followed.

On returning home she learned with dismay that her father had awoke from his sleep with much fever and pain in the head, and that restlessness had returned. She administered the composing draught, and presently dispatched nurse for the other medicines, while she took her place by the invalid.

CHAPTER II.

WE SHAKE HANDS WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"KATE, what are you thinking of, child?" cried the sick man, as she sat weary and wan beside him, silently gazing at his face.

She started at his vehemence, and said she was thinking of various things.

"The truth, child; mind, I will have the truth, and nothing else," he cried eagerly, laying his hand upon her arm, and gazing into her eyes with a piercing look.

She smiled, cheerfully.

"Why, father, I was thinking, for one thing, of how differently you will view everything in your mind when this illness shall be passed off—and how surprised you will be, then, that you have felt sorrowful and desponding now, and of how happy you and I shall be when you can laugh and talk to me, and tell me tales of the past and of your youth again."

"Kate, it is false. I know your thoughts," he said, so vehemently that she turned pale for the moment from very fear lest he should indeed have looked into her soul and seen the dark dread there which was rising above all other thoughts.

"And yet, my poor girl, it was a beautiful falsehood: it was sweet of you to hide the reality from me; but I will tell you your thoughts. They were, that Kate might be happy now, if only the old man did not keep her a prisoner far from all the glad joys that the young pine for."

Kate resumed courage, and laughed gaily as she replied,

"Not yet a prophet, dear father; you have not yet read my heart, or its deep pleasure in loving and tending you," then anxious to awaken fresher thoughts for him, she continued:

"Listen, and I will tell you more. I was thinking, for another thing, how after a few more years you may, perhaps, hear of Augustus again, and he may come back from India quite a rich man, and take you home to the old property in Ireland, and make you happy there."

He fell back on the pillow uttering his low, broken laugh, and interrupting it with groans.

"Never, never, child; happy days are gone, gone—quite gone."

"But let us hope, father: we can at least hope, can we not?"

"No; Kate I have hoped all my life; ever since I ruined myself by follies, for which may Heaven forgive me. I have hoped for better days, and they have grown worse and more unbearable, darkening your young life, sacrificing you also."

He pressed his hands over his throbbing head, adding in a loud, eager whisper, "I tell you, child, the best service you can do me, is to put me poison in your composing draught. Then I might find repose."

Kathleen, as if not hearing the last terrible words, which thrilled through her whole frame, continued the former subject.

"Poor Antony used to say the same, dear father and he told me when hope failed, patience would always be a support to us. So you must try the recipe as I do, for it is patience in waiting for him, the best of brothers, that carries me on cheerfully and makes me trust he is not yet gone from the earth."

"Patience, patience!" echoed the sick man. Ha! but that may die out, if it be too sorely tried. And as for that best of brothers, think you it is fraternal in him to send no reply to his sister's letters, and to let years pass without seeking out his poor father!"

"Who knows but his employers, whoever they may be, may have sent him away to the ends of the earth, to America, or to the far distant is-

lands, on their business, and how then could he seek us out or receive my letters? or, perhaps, alas! he may have been sent to another port by another Master, and may have no means of visiting the earth again. But believe, believe, I beseech you, my father, that if Antony yet live, it is and ever will be his first desire to see you, to demand your blessing, and to devote his life-service to you." Kathleen was deeply moved by her own words; she felt as if at that moment the invisible spirit of the brother hovered around her, whispering to her thanks for her justification of him.

The invalid, however, was little touched; as usual, she had not succeeded in interesting him in the son of whom he never spoke with affection.

The strange laugh was all his reply; and she, who could with difficulty repress some outbreak of the emotions excited in her overwrought heart, listened anxiously for the return of nurse, whose absence had become so protracted, that she was full of wonder as to what could occasion her delay.

The fever and pain of the sick father was evidently increasing, and with it her alarm. She knew not what to give, or what to do, to afford relief; and had, also, little faith in the efficacy of the promised medicine, which nurse would bring with her.

As he rolled and tossed about, he would occasionally address to her the words,

"Now, Kate, preach to me about patience, for if I am to bear this for years, I shall need it, indeed."

Kate thought of the words, "Time brings relief or rest," but could say no more.

At length she heard the welcome sound of steps in the passage below, and she moved to the door.

"Child," cried the sick man, "come to me;" then he whispered, "remember what I told you; tell the nurse about it—put it into the draught," and he laughed wildly as she passed out.

Nurse had mounted the narrow staircase; tears were in her eyes, and with them a look of exultation, which surprised the other.

"Dear nurse, they have kept you sadly long. Give me the draught quickly, quickly, the fever increases."

"My young lady, I have none with me. I have brought back no medicine."

"Oh, this is cruel," cried the daughter, in a voice of despair, "what can we do?"

"I have brought you what is better. I have brought you a physician; such a physician, as will cure all our anxieties, Miss Kate, with the Lord's blessing."

Kate clasped her hands joyfully, then added with renewed doubt,

"But my father will see no one, nurse; and at the present time he cannot be persuaded."

"Go down, Miss, then—see him yourself, he's here

in the parlour; speak with him, and we will afterwards arrange the next."

"This news is too delightful, I thank you a thousand times for such a service, kind nurse; and his name?"

"Dear heart, what signify names now; only hasten down and tell your own story. He is a fine doctor, living at Clifton, and so clever!"

Kate hurried down.

The visitor was standing by the window, looking out on the dull walls that surrounded the dwelling, and he was wrapt in his thoughts. He it was who had followed her from the chemist's shop unobserved, had watched and waited there without in the street, full of doubt and uncertainty, till nurse had sallied forth; then he had presented himself to her, spoken with her, and the result was that he now stood here, awaiting Kathleen's entrance.

He was thinking of the gloom and darkness of the dwelling, and that of the hearts that beat within it.

He was thinking, that once, long ago, there had been a freshness and joy in those hearts, which must now be well-nigh extinct. He was thinking of the pallid face, the anxious brow, and the gentle voice, that in the disguise of one of lowly rank, had that that morning attracted his attention, and touched him deeply, and the generous spirit grieved with the sufferers, while it swelled with the joy of bringing to them relief and comfort.

Surely there are many in his profession who are among the happiest of men ! To an unselfish nature, such as his, what a field for usefulness of the most important kind is here open ! What beautiful heart-pleasures, satisfying the noble longings of the mind devoted to his fellows ; for, how frequently the physician bears within him the talisman of hope, where there has been despair ; of ease, where pain has had its cruel sway ; of relief to the hearts of those who watch, as well as to that of the sufferer.

Such a man, blessed and happy in the career which his man-loving spirit had marked out for itself, and followed by the grateful attachment of many hearts whom he had gladdened, now stood in the dwelling over which hung the clouds of anxiety and suffering. The visitor contemplated them boldly and seriously, with vigorous hopes likewise of dispersing them.

“ Heaven be praised,” he cried, “ that I can bring her comfort ! ”

He turned, as the exclamation escaped his lips, and roused himself from his reverie.

She was standing at a little distance, her full eyes fixed on him in wonderment ; her lips quivered—her cheek was white, blanched with the exceeding joy that was springing up within her.

Was it not a dream ? Could it be true ; was it indeed Ernest Forsythe that stood before her ?

“ Kathleen ! dear Kathleen ! ” he cried, sprang forward, caught both her hands in his, and kissed

her—kissed her heartily, as Antony himself might have done.

So in this indeed there could be no dream!—She was in a moment all bashfulness—all embarrassment, no longer pale, but all blushes; then holding out her hand, as timidly as if even the two aunts were sitting prim and in state looking on, she as on a former occasion forgot the dancing-master's curtsy (which was fortunate, as they were now entirely out of fashion, though she was not aware of it), and only said again, as the first time she had ever seen him, "Oh, Mr. Forsythe, I am so glad to see you!—so glad to see you!"

"I thank Heaven I have found you! Antony has been seeking you through the world. I bring you his tenderest love."

"Then he lives—he lives!—and I *shall* see him once more," she exclaimed; then turning her face away, and with her hand upon her brow to hide them, the long-restrained tears gushed forth.

Even Ernest felt his own eyes filling, as he thought of the joy it would be to Antony, when he should hear of his sister's existence; and he moved away to the window, not only to spare the timid Kathleen some confusion, but also that a sudden little impulse of his own warm nature might not betray itself.

In a few moments, however, she had recovered her self-command.

"You will think me foolish, Mr. Forsythe; but

you know not how many anxious years have elapsed since I have even heard of Antony," she began.

"I know all, Miss Nayton, and you shall presently know what I have to tell, that you long to hear. I know also of your father's alarming state. If he will not see me as his adviser, perhaps he will do so as a friend of Antony. You can tell him that I bring favourable news of his son."

"Do you, indeed!—but do you not always bring us help when it is most needed? I thank you—I thank you;" and she added, in a lower voice, as a recollection of the long past flashed across her mind, "I, too, who owe you so much already!"

He shook her hand warmly, and kindly, without speaking; and she hastened to prepare her father for an interview.

CHAPTER III.

MORE NEWS OF MORE OLD FRIENDS.

THE result of the visit of Ernest to the sick chamber was favourable.

The news that Antony had been for many years seeking for his father, and that he had earned a fortune which he longed to dedicate to the service of that father, was the first remedy administered by the physician to the invalid; and when this composing draught had been given to the fevered mind, the cure of the bodily disease became less difficult.

The words of one of the most celebrated of German writers expresses for us the influence of this new joy on the hearts of Kathleen and nurse, as well as of the sick parent :

“The evening bound up with a soft bandage the morning of pain; the poppy-juice of sixty drops of joy was mixed up with every hour; and they were soothed and exhilarated by the medicine.”*

* “Siebenkas,” JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

And days of still more comfort followed to the daughter, as well as to the father, as she perceived that gradually but surely the malady was giving way to the able treatment of the physician, who, being established so near as at Clifton, was able to be unfailing in his daily visits to them.

Happy Kathleen! With what throbbing heart and glistening eyes she would sit there, upon the bed, at her father's feet, listening to the narrations of Ernest, while nurse stood weeping by weeping with love and gladness, to know that her dear Master Antony lived, and was prosperous in the world; and the pleased friend from whose lips the delicious honey-words flowed, felt his whole soul a sun of love, warming his entire being, while it poured a cheering influence of happiness on other hearts, and he sketched for them the beautiful prose poem of Antony's life, (the early and heart-secret details of which, however, dear reader, only you and I know).

He told how the poetic tales written by the deaf boy in his childhood, had excited in Lady Melville admiration for the unknown and boy-writer; how her young son, by the startling power of discernment of character which is peculiar in some children, had become interested in him the moment he saw him, of how, from this love at first sight, had sprung a deep and vehement affection in that little heart, which burned with increasing power as he learned to know him more; of how the talents and intelligence

of Antony had been appreciated by Sir Frederick, whose esteem and confidence he won, and to whom he proved himself in the course of the few years of his secretaryship of important service; of how, subsequently, the Baronet had obtained for him a position of higher consequence, and of independence also, where his abilities were brought out into more public and more active service; of how he had won the approbation of those eminent men under whom he had acted by his untiring energy and promptitude; of how, on one occasion (and this not the only one) he had received a reward from Government for an unusual service. Some important dispatches had been delayed, thus occasioning considerable inconvenience, and it appeared impossible they could reach the ministers by the time desired, when he undertook the delivery, travelled night and day from Pesth to London, with an energy and speed such as made the brave Waghorn celebrated, and placed the documents in the hands of the eager expectants on the appointed day. So, Antony Nayton had become great. The young diplomatist now held a remunerative office which placed him at Vienna. He had sent letters of inquiry in all directions, to discover the retreat of his father and sister, after having crossed the Atlantic, and sought them in Jamaica, in vain.

"On the day I first knew Antony," continued the narrator, "when he was both the deaf and the dumb boy, he told me that it was his ambition, and should

be the aim of his life, to earn the power of restoring his father to his country and to his position. Indeed, the probability of the realisation of such a dream seemed to me, then, absurdly small, but he has carried out practically the noble idea, by patience and honourable exertion, which have formed the motto of his life."

"Heaven make me less unworthy of my son," murmured the father, while the sister's soul was wafted by the breath of devotion, away through infinite space, to the Glorious Presence, on the golden cloud of thankfulness.

Now followed, before many weeks were out, the seal upon all their pleasantest expectations, namely, a letter from Antony, which forwarded also a draught of some hundreds of pounds to his father for his immediate use, and a request that he would select for himself a house to be his home, wherever he should desire, and remove thither as speedily as his health would permit.

Joy and love pervaded his letters, proving to Kathleen that the brotherly heart remained the same, and had lost nothing of its intrinsic gold by its contact with the world.

More letters and larger sums of money followed, and were replied to.

The neighbourhood of Cheltenham was selected for the situation of the new home, and Ernest took upon himself to choose and engage the house. He was consulted in all particulars relating to the furnish-

ing it ; and everything was to be speedily arranged in readiness for the return of Antony, which might be confidently expected before the summer closed.

There were times when neither of the three newly happy hearts inclosed in the gloomy lodging-house of that secluded street, could realise to themselves the truth of their change of fortune. Nurse had declared that she had thought she should never see again a smile upon the face of her darling lady, and that her old eyes should not look upon her Master Antony more ; so that, even now, she hardly dared credit her senses.

The father, whose health improved, though he did not yet regain strength, was oppressed and enfeebled by his very joy, and sat for hours without power of exertion, silent, and calmly intent upon his own peaceful thoughts.

Kathleen was in a paradise of youthful enjoyment. After the winter of long desolate years, and the storm of her alarm, the spring sun of awakened joyous expectation shone with more intense brilliancy than at any previous season of her life. She had turned the last corner in the path of anxiety, along which her patient desires for her brother had borne her—and “time,”—dear friendly time, had at length “brought relief.”

In the society of Ernest, she was inexpressibly happy. She felt that she—that each member of her family,—owed all their happiness to him ; and that

without him, even Antony had never risen thus high, and joy had never again dawned upon them. Her heart was filled by a glow of gratitude to him, which she had not courage or power to express. Their frequent conversations in the little dingy parlour had given the place, once so gloomy to her, an interest which endeared it to her in an unexpected degree. Indeed, the small dwelling, which she had often found so comfortless, was earning from her an affectionate feeling, amounting to regret, at the prospect of leaving it, since Ernest had taught her to experience within it happy thoughts, which already seemed to obliterate the dark past from her mind.

They often spoke together of the days at Ponterry (which place Ernest had frequently visited since she left it), and it was evidently an enjoyment to both to be thus occupied.

How for-ever-dear to us are the memories of our youth! Whether they whisper of joy, or sorrow, they are alike sacred to us; so sacred, so precious that we caress them in our hearts with a rapturous fondness, triumphing proudly over Time, that though he may deny us the kiss of Happiness, and fear our darling hopes away, yet these, his early children, are beyond the influence of his touch. These, our dear recollections of what has been, are ours—ours; and he dares not, cannot, forbid them us, for while Mind is ours, they are ours also.

It is with our hearts as with the globes. Around each, time deposits various strata, which are at first soft and susceptible of impression. Each succeeding incrustation conceals the fossil-marked surface of the last; but though deep, and covered from view, those impressions are still there, becoming more and more indelible as Time hardens them, and ready to be thrown up to light by any convulsion which may penetrate so far below.

To Ernest and Kathleen it was now a mutual pleasure to break through the surface of their later years, and draw from the deep heart the prints of the footsteps of their younger days; so they spoke together gladly of old friends and well-remembered scenes.

Gladis and Howel Philips, he told her, had been happy and successful. At the mines he had earned the means of purchasing the farm Sanford, the Englishman, had held at the time of the incendiary fire. They now lived there with a little group of three or four pretty children, and were about the richest folk in the village. (N.B.—Readers, in those days there was no free trade, and farmers could exist in Wales and England.)

Mrs. Evans still kept the lodging-house, where Kathleen had enjoyed such a pleasurable time.

“And the family of the Donoughts,” she asked; “did it exist there still?”

The parents, unchanged in any way, dwelt even

now, at Ponterry, with four of the girls. The five sons were launched out in the world, where, doubtless, they were tumbling about like empty casks, bruising themselves as well as all with whom they came in contact, by reason of their emptiness. Miss Donought, the amiable eldest was, however, married. Yes; she had been selected by a schoolmaster for his consort, on account, as one might easily guess, of the talent for correction, scolding, and knocking into order, the spirits of all children; which she possessed in so eminent a degree. One may, therefore, conclude that this lady is entirely happy; however much the reverse her husband, or the school over which she presides, may find themselves.

At the vicarage of T —, dwelt still the good pastor. Ernest had not long ago visited his dear and honoured father, and found him calmly enjoying, in health and comfort, the excellent life which had so long contributed to the welfare of others, for he still lived and laboured in the garden of human flowers, to the improvement of which he had heartily devoted the energies of his whole being; and though without companions in his hermitage, he did not feel lonely, so truly did he always realise to himself the presence of the great Master whom he served.

“And Llanawr Park?”

It had been untenanted ever since the departure of the Allingworth family, when they retired to an

estate in Scotland, more than six years ago. The owner had latterly sent orders by his agent, that the park, gardens, and mansion, should be kept up in order, and with care, but it was not certain whether he intended to occupy it himself, or let it again shortly.

"Could Ernest give her some news of Nina Allingworth?"

Only that she had married Lord Darcy some months after the family left Wales.

This was to Kathleen almost incredible—she was as truly grieved as she was surprised. She said that it must have been the cruel work of the parents, for that she knew that Nina had a feeling for the nobleman, almost amounting to aversion; and, indeed, she was fully persuaded the unhappy girl had loved some other deeply, and who was, she believed, worthy of her; but that who he was, or what unfortunate fate separated them, she had not known.

The mention of Nina had brought a cloud over the brow of Ernest, and it was with a grave expression he said, he thanked Kathleen for what she had told him.

"You have justified Nina to my mind by your evidence that this marriage was against her own will; the rest of your story, however, renders mine the more extraordinary, as well as the more sad."

"I was with her the autumn preceding the mar-

riage," said Kate; "could those twelve intervening months have effected any change in her dislike of Lord Darcy, or her previous attachment to another?"

"Impossible, in such a heart as Nina's," he answered, vehemently. "Such changes can be effected only by years, where the affections are deep and powerful."

"So you think that, when they are so, even years can materially change them? It seems to me, that an intense love, worthily placed, must be unalterable in the longest trial." Ernest looked up at her quickly, and in a few moments answered,

"You are right, Miss Nayton; it is not time, so much as circumstances, that create change in such affection as we speak of."

"Can I hope, then, that Nina is happy?"

"Believe me, Miss Nayton, hers is a broken heart!" he said, and took his hat as he rose.

"There is one friend of dear Antony's, in whom you have greatly interested me," she said, as they shook hands, and he was taking his leave. "Will you, another day, tell me something more of him?"

"Willingly; and to whom can I have introduced you, that you desire to become better acquainted with."

"The little Percy."

So the subject was not forgotten; and on the next opportunity, they spoke again of Ernest's cousin.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EVENING CHAT.

It was towards evening. Her father was sleeping, and Kathleen and Ernest sat together in the parlour window, in the last light from a setting sun that could penetrate to that gloomy apartment.

"Indeed, Percy Melville has become already quite dear to me, since he so fondly loved Antony," said Kathleen.

"He was a singular boy in many respects. His early childhood was made peculiarly beautiful to him by his happy mind, though he constantly suffered. His affection for Antony was more than a *sentiment*. It was, as well as his concern for his deafness, far more deep and urgent than is common with children. Always looking forward to an early death, he possessed an unusual purity of heart and thought. The prospect even of death became at last fair to him; and he had a singular desire to be

buried in some beautiful spot, where sunlight and singing birds, and gay flowers, might make the bed beautiful,—where should sleep the little life that had been so beautiful here. I have been often struck by a strong idea the child expressed to us, that the churchyard and the church should not lie so near together, that the gloom imparted by the records of death round the walls of the sacred building, is not in accordance with the joy and peace of a temple. I believe, indeed, that my little cousin had truth in this thought. For what pride, worldliness, and vanity are usually exposed in these monumental flatteries! Why should the house of God be made a register of the genealogies of men? And, again, what has life—I mean the life of the soul—to do with death?"

"And yet the one is the portal to the other," said Kathleen, softly.

"True; but why connect associations of the most dreaded point in our existence here, with religion, with prayer, and the peace of God. We enter the church in order to learn how to live: if we know that lesson, we are safe in knowing also how to die, without an awful picture being held forth to our minds at the same moment that we are invited to communion of thought with our Creator, and to joyful praise. The terror of death is not lessened by its contemplation. The bettering the life here, and thus the life beyond, is the only means of robbing death

of its sting. Surely we are mistaken in making the house of God that also of the symbol of his wrath on man for sin, which death is."

"But there is a solemnity in death which suits well that holy edifice," observed the other.

"Here is, I believe, another unfortunate error which has done harm to Christianity. The solemnity of death lies in the awful mystery, the pains and grief ever attendant on it. Why permit the shadow of these black wings to be cast upon our religion? It is not natural to humanity to connect these two, and other ages and other religions have not done so. The sepulchres of the Jews did not crowd around their synagogues. The marble temples of the Greeks are entirely distinct from their cemeteries. In India and China, also, we find the same."

"But these nations were ignorant that through the grave we rise to life?"

"Pardon me. The belief in a future state was even with them very general. It is as an instinct in man's natural mind, though we alone enjoy the privilege of Revealed Truth, and of certainty on this point. The custom of burying in and around churches, having been early introduced in the time of persecution, and maintained in the dark reign of Roman Catholicism, when prayers for the souls of the dead formed great part of the church-service, I see no reason why we should blind ourselves to its fallacy in our enlightened times. But the grand mistake

lies here. Weak Christians imagine that gloom and gravity form an important part of devotion; they cease to laugh and to be merry when they begin to be religious. Thus, cheerful spirits, the young especially, whose natures love gladness, and, as bees compile honey, seek and extract it from every event-flower of life, turn with distaste from that piety which appears to them to rob the soul of its elasticity; thus do thousands of would-be holy supporters of their faith do it an irremediable injury. They do not understand that true piety is compatible with every enjoyment that is innocent; that religion is not given only for those who suffer, and push from them the world, like peevish children, because it gives not what they asked, but for the prosperous and happy also, since it alone can sanctify our tears or our mirth." And Ernest here interrupted himself by a hearty laugh. "But dear Miss Nayton, I am, perhaps, wearying you with a sermon which is indeed most uncalled for, and inappropriate to such an auditor."

"Indeed, you had deeply interested me. I think I liked all you were saying, very much, particularly the last part," said Kathleen, simply. "It is beautiful to me to hear of a child so young as the sweet Percy dwelling without dread upon the thought of death. This must have rendered him peculiarly interesting to you and all around him."

"Yes, he interested us deeply, indeed; and one

night in particular, during his terrible illness at Spa, can never be effaced from my memory. Your brother was even more deeply concerned in it than myself. Perhaps the detail will weary you."

"Nay—impossible! Every word relating to Antony must be dear to me."

"Your brother had been obliged to visit Brussels, a short time previous to the occasion of which I speak, on a business which was of high importance to himself, as well as others. It was a matter on which Percy had been long anxious, and which he urged him to undertake so earnestly that Antony had no power to resist. Percy drew his hand within both his own, and laid it on his fainting heart; and such was the influence the child had attained over the man, that he drew from him, then and there, a promise that he would do that which no other friend or relative had yet been able to persuade him to."

"And what was that?" interrupted the sister.

"I do not feel myself at liberty to inform you. I leave Antony to explain, at his own will, a matter so important, and even fraught with danger. I dare not further betray him. But to continue our subject. When we left the bedside of Percy, the little life seemed failing; but he said, with prophetic energy, that he was confident he should be preserved till our return—that he should wait for Antony. We went; and the mother afterwards told me, that though he grew weaker and weaker, and we had

been for some days away, the child continued to affirm he should certainly again see us. We were, in truth, detained by Antony's severe illness, which overwhelmed him so alarmingly, that I feared he would not be able to command strength to carry him back before it should be too late.

"At length, however, he was enabled to undertake the journey. It was an autumn night; and the storm gathered and raged among the countless branches of the Ardennes Forest, with a sound which Percy said was like a roaring sea; and it seemed to him as if the tide were bearing on swiftly towards him, to overwhelm him with its great wave. They told me that his constant exclamation was, 'Oh! the tide—the tide! it will swallow me! I shall float away on it! Oh! bring back Antony, before I am gone.' It was the tide-wave of death he signified. And the heart-riven mother hung over her only one, wishing that Antony might never return, since, in his coming, the last binding chain of the struggling soul to earth would, she believed, be broken.

"He was restless with expectation, then faint with feebleness; but when the physicians told him that in remaining calm lay his best means of retaining consciousness, he became wonderfully tranquil. It was evident to them that the crisis was fast approaching. His mother says she heard he prayed, as he lay there, with the eyes gazing up, and the

little hand resting in hers; but no ear but that of the mother could catch the faint articulations. She says he prayed that his voice might not fail him till the last. But she believed, on that strange night of trial, the last moment of his visible life was fast approaching." Ernest paused.

"Ah! and you were too late. Antony came not. Oh! terrible—terrible!"

Ernest, busy with his memories, did not hear her words, but continued:—

"Antony and I were dashing along at lightning-speed upon the high road, and the storm of rain beat in our faces; the wind drove us back; the thunder frightened the horses; and it seemed as if the Evil One were summoning all his powers to frustrate our design, and impede the possibility of the fulfilment of the long and often-repeated prayers of the young and ardent soul, so worthy of heaven. I felt as though it were a desperate conflict between the powers of Holiness and those of Darkness, and that all nature sided with the army of demons. The blackness of the air blinded us; we could not discern the road; but we dashed on as if the fate of a nation, not the soothing only of perhaps the last moments of a little child, had been the aim of our journey.

"Twice we lost our way, but the Spirit of Love yet guided us with invisible hand; and at length we sprang from the reeking horses at the desired threshold. The storm was now past; the air was

still. Antony rushed in, and hurried to the chamber, where the eager eyes of the unhappy parents watched their child.

"Percy's gaze was on the door; he stretched out his arms to him who entered; a gleam of exquisite beauty and gladness lighted up his countenance. It appeared to me that there was the stamp of Heaven on the soul and mirrored in the face.

"'See, Antony, my friend, I have waited for you; my prayers have been heard!' so said the child in a clear and bell-toned voice of indescribable sweetness, and Antony, tearing off his drenched cloak, rushed forward and knelt beside him.

"And now the two spoke together. Then he signified a desire to rest in Antony's arms. He told me, as he kissed me for having brought back Antony to him, and thanked me,—he told me that he thought he could live on a little space, since he was too happy now to go; and he laid in the cradle of the friend's arms as he had often laid before, one hand held in that of his mother; and he was still, and calm, and bright, too, as is a touch of light from another globe visiting this and lying on motionless water.

"Pretty child! the storm of anxious and alarmed expectation had ceased in his soul, and life's flame beamed on mildly throughout the night, the clear eyes calmly moving from the faces of the parents to that of Antony. Occasionally he spoke in that

pure tone which was strangely lovely, though unnatural.

At length, starting up and glancing eagerly around, he cried, with an expression of pain—

“‘Mama, the tide! the tide! it is passing! Antony, Antony, keep me, hold me!’ and falling back again, murmured, ‘It is past!’

“The agonised mother clasped the little hand in speechless longing to detain the spirit, as, in the dusk of the morning, nestling closer and closer to Antony, he sunk into a gentle sleep, and when the sun rose, it showed the closed eyelids and the pallid face, and she believed—yes, even the mother believed—the child’s sleep was that of death. Antony, too, his limbs trembling, his whole frame chilled by that thought of woe, breathed in his silent heart a farewell to the young spirit whom we then imagined, Kathleen Nayton, nearer to thy mother than his own.

“Sir Frederick’s violent agitation could hardly be subdued; but Lady Melville I had never before seen so strong in heart; she was tranquil and resigned. Her grief had reached its consummation, and yet it subdued her not. It glorified her whole soul, and elevated it above her affliction. For years she had beheld before her this dreaded trial, and had, indeed, had leisure for the contemplation.

“But is it not often with us all, that what we have long feared terribly to encounter, we can, when at

length it is unavoidable, go forth to meet with a newly-roused, a noble and undaunted courage? And now the mother, having obtained this mastery over her woe, was spared more trial.

"I approached; I laid my hand upon the little heart, saying, 'Hush! he sleeps!' It was yet warm, and I could discern a gentle breath stealing from the lips. The physicians entered, expecting all was over. We whispered together, and one of them addressed to Antony the words—

" 'The crisis is past; he may live!' "

Ernest was silent.

"Oh, joy!" exclaimed Kathleen, "then he lives—he lives. How beautiful!"

"Then Antony rose up and laid the light burden on the bed. The little face was not whiter than his own—he sank beside him in a swoon: the revulsion of feeling had been too strong for him. We carried him away."

"And Percy——?"

"The trance in which he lay lasted long, and the calm and happy mother, in whose heart there was, I knew, an ecstasy which she hardly dared to recognise, sat beside him. I was present when he at length awoke, and perceived that this sleep, or rather stupor, had effected a wonderful change in the sufferer. It had been one of those cases in which suspension from all sensibility or effort enables the exhausted frame to regain the power of retaining life; and the

spark which had well nigh died out, now revived and struggled into flame. He told his mother that he had had a beautiful dream. I have not forgotten his pretty words then :

“ ‘ I thought, mama, that the good spirits from Starland came and told you the King wanted me ; so you were very good, and gave me to them without weeping, because it was His will. Then they took me to a golden gate, behind which there was a glorious light. They said Antony’s mother lived beyond it ; and we knocked at the gate ; but the kind King, without letting the gate be opened, told us that He loved you, mama, so much, that he would give me back to you. So the spirits folded their wings before my face, for the brightness was dazzling, and I thanked the King, and the spirits were flying down with me to you again when I awoke, and find myself on earth still.’

“ ‘ And in your mother’s arms ! oh, my child—my child !’

“ His father wept unrestrainedly.

“ After that day, Percy’s recovery was slow, but sure ; and though always delicate, he has not since had so dangerous a malady.”

“ Dear Antony seems to have been keenly affected,” observed Kathleen. “ I do not wonder that his illness at Brussels, his anxiety, that long journey, and then the touching scene, should have so overcome him.”

"He now became again severely ill, and our alarm was transferred from the little Percy to his friend. Indeed, on his recovery, I observed a cloud upon his whole being, which has, I think, never, since that period, passed away."

"And yet he must have been wonderfully happy that Percy was restored to him."

"At first he appeared unable to credit the fact. Subsequently, as he lay upon a couch in Percy's chamber, I frequently observed that he gazed on the mother and child with an exquisite gladness that was beyond expression."

"He has so tender—so affectionate a heart," interposed Kathleen.

"The attachment between him and my little cousin has since formed a great happiness for each. The gloom, of which I speak, is evidently an entirely separate feeling, arising from some cause altogether independent of his connection with Percy. There is in it something most unaccountable and mysterious to me."

"When he comes to us once more, we must disperse it," said Kate, cheerfully.

"Heaven grant we may! the brightest prosperity has not, however, been yet able to do so. And now, does Miss Nayton hear the troublesome voice of that old steeple? It tells me that I must bid her good evening,"—and Ernest rose.

* * * * *

The sun had so long ago set, while they had remained talking together, that darkness was following twilight in their little apartment, which had thus become gloomy indeed; but to Kathleen all was bright while Ernest spoke.

CHAPTER V.

A FAREWELL REVOKED.

THE last day of Mr. and Miss Ingram's occupation of their quiet lodgings was at hand, and the morning preceding that of their departure found chests of drawers empty, and boxes packed, and nurse busy, and the old man fidgetty, and Kathleen very unhappy.

The aunts had long ago been written to, and told that Kate and her father would shortly arrive at Cheltenham. Ernest had called on the good ladies; they had visited and approved of the new home, and there was nothing more to be done now, but for the father and his daughter to lay aside their long-assumed name, and to drive out of the heavy atmosphere of Bristol, to the pretty country in which they were for the future to dwell.

But Kathleen was unhappy; yes, though no one would have imagined that possible, and though she

upbraided herself for the weakness, yet she certainly was, secretly, quite secretly, very unhappy; had shed tears often and long, during the night, and sighed continually at the thought of leaving the dwelling where she had spent so many years, and, latterly, such happy days. Indeed, she was convinced that she could not have endured the fine house and the fashionable establishment over which she was now to preside, for her father and Antony, had it not been for one circumstance—that it was chosen for her by Ernest, kind Ernest! What amiability, and patience, and goodness of heart he had shown towards them, in all that he had done! Surely, he was the best of men in the whole world, except Antony, and now she should see no more of him. They would go away, and enjoy all that he had prepared for their comfort, and he would be living miles and miles away; there would be no chance of seeing him—except, perhaps, now and then—during years. Would she not rather a thousand times have continued to live in their little abode, where, perhaps, he might occasionally bring his smiles to cheer them, than to go into that troublesome, disagreeable thing, called “society?” What pleasure could Kathleen have in its gaieties or amusements? She felt now that she could never enjoy them: they were not to her taste. Of course it could not the least signify to Ernest, whether they went away and never saw

him again, or whether they stayed in his neighbourhood. She was perfectly aware that he regarded herself, as well as her father, with indifference—except for Antony's sake. They did not possess qualities which could have earned Ernest's regard; he must require intellectual minds, and talent, and power of character, to excite his admiration or esteem; she never felt so little, or so humbled in her own eyes, as when in his presence, and this gave a bitterness to her regrets which was very trying to the tender, modest heart of our gentle Kate.

He called that day, as she knew well he would not fail to do, in order to wish them good-bye, and give some last injunctions to her father, regarding his health.

Ernest pressed her hand, as he entered, with an unusual cordiality, and his manner betrayed an excitement that surprised her.

Kathleen knew not the cause; but there is no reason, reader, why we should not acquaint ourselves with it.

It must, therefore, be here mentioned, that on the previous day, he had, on quitting that same house, been followed by certain imaginations that, having latterly taken possession of his brain, he found it impossible to chase out of it. Indeed, they had proved such agreeable companions that this impossibility he in no wise desired should be done away

with. So, as he drove swiftly along, to visit his next patient, he permitted them to chatter to him within there, as loudly as they would.

The patient who was soon to be the subject of his deliberations, was a single lady, of sixty-five, living in Bristol, who, in fact, was in the enjoyment of admirable health, but was so possessed with the belief that she was an invalid, that she insisted on her physician's daily attendance, and did not hesitate, if she imagined herself ailing in the night, to send for four or five of the principal medical men of the neighbourhood, to have a consultation on her case.

It was after a summons of this kind, at five o'clock, A.M., and a consultation in her house, at which she had insisted in keeping the gentlemen engaged for an extraordinary period of time, that Ernest had found himself in the chemist's shop, on the morning when he had first recognised Kathleen Nayton.

He was therefore now disposed to forgive the folly of this strange and provoking patient, since she had chanced to be in a measure the cause of his finding the retreat of Antony's sister, and his being once more thrown into the companionship of the pretty and amiable Kathleen. So, he rolled on to the mansion of the single lady,—thinking, thinking, thinking only of the lovely young maiden. What a sweet face that was of hers! and how it would haunt him, with its soft eye retreating, when it met his, so often, to the ground, with the rounded cheek—

to which he could so quickly summon the ready blush—with the full red lips, so fluctuating between a sad expression and a smile. It was quite impossible to rid himself of this pleasant picture, hovering, as it was, so continually before his thoughts.

When he was at the house of the single lady of sixty-five, the healthy patient had been very chatty and good humoured, which was with her unusual, and she had, by way of being exceedingly polite, said she hoped that Mrs. Forsythe and family were all well, which made poor Ernest blush as deep a rose as Kathleen herself; and this set his thoughts on another track, as he drove homewards, and suddenly it appeared to him very strange that he should have permitted himself to arrive at the age he had now attained without providing himself with a wife. He, too, who was a person so little suited to a hermit's life, who was no more born to die a bachelor, than —than Kathleen Nayton to die an old maid. Thus he pondered and pondered. There was, however, one cause of hesitation and some little doubt and alarm to which he could not blind himself, although of a sanguine disposition.

Who that has once suffered a defeat, whether in war or love, will not require an increased amount of courage to persuade him to a second onset!

Ernest thought he would insure his prize more prudently now, before advancing openly to declare his designs.

When, therefore, he went to pay his last visit to the father of Kathleen, he determined that it should be a long one, in which he would prove himself so delightfully amiable, so lively, so charming, as to be altogether irresistible; but lo!—on arriving in the field where his tactics were to be called into exercise, his own old, impulsive, frank nature rendered them utterly useless. Since he could not say all he felt, he said—nothing.

Then Kathleen helped the feeble man to rise from his easy chair, that he might advance towards Ernest and grasp his hand with both his own, and tell him, as the tears started to his eyes through his emotion, how deeply grateful was he from his heart for all that he had done, for the old life he had saved, for the joy he had given them, for his benevolence, his care for them, his constant attendance and kind counsel, for every word and act that he had bestowed upon them. He thanked him, too, for the first thoughts of love he had given his poor deaf son, for his unwearied friendship to him, throughout so many important years; while Ernest was at the same time so gratified and confused, he knew not how to stay the quick torrent of his words. Kathleen stood by, her eyes filling with tears, which it was so impossible for her to hide, that she was forced to turn away her head. She was rejoicing to hear the flow of long-owed and inexpressed gratitude, and she longed to add her own assent to each word

her father spoke, but beyond faltering "Yes, indeed, Mr. Forsythe," towards the commencement of the speech, she could not utter a word.

Ernest was, indeed, so touched, he feared almost to lose his own self-command; he saw there was now no opportunity for advance in his intention, and that he could only rush away from the very spot where he wished most to linger, so, with a kind "Good-bye, God bless you both," and with a cheerful allusion to the expected return of Antony, and a hearty shake of the hand with each, he took his leave; he had lingered a moment as he pressed that of Kathleen, and looked up into her face, but her eyes were still on the ground, and she could not articulate the good-bye, or any other word, so he turned away, and now he was gone—gone, and she heard his footsteps retreat along the passage, and the street door loudly shut. Then she devoted all her attention to her father, helped him back again to his seat, smoothed the pillow on which he was accustomed to rest his head, and forgot no little addition it was in her power to make to his comfort. Then she sat on the footstool before him, and talked of the times they had known here together, and of her aunts' ignorance of their story, and of the changed life which was now before them, until she had sufficiently amused his mind, and he needed her no longer; and then she quietly left the room. He did not notice the pallor of the sweet face, as it turned

away, and guessed not of the emotion, which, when the door was closed between it and him, betrayed itself there.

Meanwhile Ernest walked slowly and thoughtfully down the hilly street, but before turning the corner at the bottom, where his gig awaited him, glanced up somewhat tenderly towards the house he had left. Then suddenly he turned back, and ascending it with quick steps, he reached the door, and was about to raise his hand to the bell; but, checking himself, he again left the spot, passed the door and proceeded slowly a short way onwards. Yes, three times did Ernest slowly pass that door, and return quickly to it. On the third ascent up the street, his delighted eyes beheld the door open, and he gazed eagerly, hoping that the same charming little face that inhabited his mind, would, at that moment, appear there and come out into the street. But, alas! it was only the servant-maid, who ran out hastily to the neighbouring green-grocer's for a string of onions that had been forgotten, and would be needed for her and the landlady's dinner. Direful disappointment! but this little circumstance proved of important service, for the maid had left the door ajar. The aperture was, indeed, inviting. He hesitated no longer, but pushing open the friendly portal, entered again the dark passage, lighted by the staircase window beyond; as he proceeded along it he heard the parlour door close; he reached it, and lo!

there stood poor Kate, with that sadly pale little face, which we have said she hastened from her father's presence to conceal.

"Dear Kate, you are ill," whispered a voice in her ear, that made her start with wonder. She glanced round, then fled up stairs, as if terrified; but he followed, and presently his arm was round her waist, and her hand held in his.

"You have so frightened me, Mr. Forsythe, I thought you had gone long ago," she faltered, struggling to free herself.

"Yes, it is true, but I have returned; I have something I so exceedingly desire to say to you before you go away, and if you will allow me, to your father also," began Ernest, and then rushed headlong to the point. All was said and done in but a few moments, and the two joyously-throbbing hearts sent flashing sparks to the bright eyes, that looked penetratingly, lovingly, into each other, and read there what it was intensely beautiful for them to read.

Happy breath of time! It were difficult to state whether to Ernest or Kathleen it were the most exquisitely joyous; and this short minute was, for both, the commencement of a long and loving united life, for the two spirits then bound together could never again be torn apart by circumstance or space.

CHAPTER VI.

WHICH TELLS OF HAPPY RE-UNIONS.

THE Misses Singlevie set out from Felicity Villa to give Kathleen and her father the first greeting in their new home with great glee. The usually somewhat chilly hearts of the spinsters warmed into a loving glow as they looked forward to embracing their niece after so long a separation. They were all curiosity to see the two travellers, wondering much what effect time had had upon their appearance, if their step-brother's hair were yet grey, and if Kate were much tanned by the West Indian sun.

As for themselves, the sisters were not changed, excepting that each year had left some slight trace upon the contour of each face, rendering the angles perhaps more acute, and the expression of Miss Joan's, in particular, somewhat more severe. The lips were still as tightly compressed, the necks as stiffly drawn up to their utmost extent, the backs still as wall-flat and

erect; the tongues still as ready, like brave and sharp swords, for the conflict. They wondered greatly that Kate was not yet married, since so many young girls who went out to the West Indies married there quickly. However, Miss Bess thought there was still a chance for her, as she was hardly three-and-twenty, and in her opinion girls never lost all hope of "being settled" till they reached the age of four-and-twenty, when they generally, she thought, lost their fancy for marriage—"for it wears itself out by that time," she said, "and then, too, young women are no longer so engaging."

Miss Joan, however, asserted there were exceptions to this rule; for instance, when the Rev. Daniel Wouldgood made her an offer she was nine-and-twenty, though he had indeed taken her for a girl of twenty-two; and she also reminded Bess that she might have married at thirty-eight.

These statements, certainly, could not be contradicted, but then the first gentleman was so very old, and the second so many years younger than her sister, that Bess begged to say Joan could not, from these cases only, be competent to judge of such matters.

The offended lady could only reply that they might certainly render her more acquainted with what might or might not be, than Bess, considering that *she* had never, Joan believed, had any *personal* opportunity of judging.

Miss Bess appeared quite at a loss to understand what her sister meant by an observation so strangely expressed, and to change the subject, remarked that she had half expected, that since Kathleen had dwelt so many years in the western world, and she knew that poor Captain Bruce—she meant Marley—had been forced also to cross the Atlantic, that on those distant shores the two young people might have again met, and fate might at length have brought about a happy issue to the first and early attachment of her dear niece.

Miss Joan here stopped short in her walk, (they were close to the mansion whither they were bound,) and with a contemptuous smile observed, smartly:

“Why, bless my soul, Bess, have you forgotten your geography? Do you suppose America is a small village in which if two people live for a twelve-month they must unavoidably fall in each other’s way? Thank Heaven, there is room there for the abominable Marley, as well as for our niece to exist, without their ever so much as setting eyes on one another,” and she rang the door bell violently and entered the house.

It was not long before Kathleen’s arms were around them, with all the warmth and affection of the child-niece they had tenderly loved and cared for in her early days, but she was now, and for once they both agreed in one opinion, a truly handsome young woman, and, in her joyous light-heartedness,

appeared younger even than when, oppressed with more than one sorrow, she had parted from them. And now the extraordinary tale of her never having quitted England was to be told, her father having consented to throw aside all pride, save in his children, and to confess without deception the humiliations he had undergone. And now Miss Bess had to wonder and exclaim at the strange and unexpected intelligence, while Miss Joan could only assert that she had guessed it from the beginning, and was not in the least surprised.

And now there was news of Augustus to be heard, for many letters from him had been received from time to time by the aunts.

But we can narrate more in a few words than the letters would tell us, of the long and the short of the whole matter.

It may be remembered that Augustus had, so early as in his school-days, formed the design of making the acquaintance of his uncle at Naples, and of the young lady who was educated by him as his adopted daughter, in the hope that the hand and the fortune of the lady might by a happy fate be ultimately handed over to himself. The circumstance of his regiment being stationed at Malta for a short time, gave the desired opportunity of a visit to Naples, and of his expressing to the uncle the gratitude which was due to him, by whose liberality Augustus had been enabled to enter on his profession. Mr. Wal-

tingham received him but stiffly. The young lady, however, was introduced to him, and pronounced in his private mind likely to answer all agreeable expectations. Before his second trip to Naples, however, the startling report reached him that the young lady had eloped with an Italian Count, who was penniless, to the disappointment of many such a fortune-hunter as himself. The intelligence only served to hasten Augustus' second visit to Naples, in order to examine the state of his uncle's feelings regarding himself, but he was received with marked coldness by Mr. Waltingham, who was on the point of selling his château with the purpose of travelling in Egypt. Poor Augustus was therefore forced to endure his disappointment with silent magnanimity, and on his regiment being ordered to India, found himself condemned to a hopeless life far up the country, there to amuse himself with hunting tigers instead of heiresses. It was only latterly that he had been permitted to return to more civilized life, and enabled to forward to England the means of paying off a few of his long-standing debts.

In the tastefully arranged drawing-room of their new abode, sat Kathleen, on an August morning, happy and lovely in the glow of the sunlight from without, and the sunlight within the apartment, for Ernest sat smiling near, glancing frequently at her downward-bent face. She was looking through a

volume of Retch's etchings which he had brought, and, but a few moments since, made her own.

Her father was seated at the further end of the room, in his elbow chair, with the newspaper in his hand, which he occasionally read, or sometimes uttered a few words to the young people, in his low, muttering voice, or sometimes nodded off to sleep. He was accustomed to these little morning naps, and since his illness, had not been able, without them, to keep up his vigour throughout the day. From one short doze he now woke up with a start, and a gesture expressive of some troubled thoughts.

"Kate, Kate," he said, and she was by his side in a moment, moving the cushion on which his head rested, to make the posture more agreeable, "was I sleeping then, my dear?" he asked, "or did you too hear something unusual?"

"I heard nothing, but our voices; and Ernest and I were speaking very low."

"So! well it was a little dream then, for I fancied the boy was come home to us; when did he say he would be here? To-morrow or next day, was it not?"

"Antony could not name the exact day, he said towards the end of the month, and to-day it is the twenty-second; but Ernest thinks he may be here very shortly now."

The old man groaned, and turned restlessly in his chair, as Kate glided back to hers.

She understood that groan, and it disturbed her, for she had observed latterly that her father appeared to anticipate little pleasure from the event to which she looked forward with eager longing. She saw that he rather dreaded than desired the meeting with his son, but she could not entirely discover the cause of a sentiment apparently so unnatural.

The truth, however, lay in this, that he looked back with discontent to the time when he had treated the deaf boy of nine years old with neither kindness nor affection, and pride excited within him a dissatisfaction with the one whom he had wronged, and to whose filial tenderness he now owed his every comfort and enjoyment. He felt that he had not contributed to the advancement or happiness of the child, to whom he had denied his love, through his disappointment at its infirmity. Pride, therefore, had even excited displeasure in the parent, that the son should have met his indifference with dutiful and affectionate exertions. He, therefore, feared, and wished to delay as long as possible, a meeting calculated to rouse within him sentiments of only an unpleasant nature. Perhaps too, the recollection of his having been so entirely mistaken in judging of that son's capabilities, had aroused with him, though unknown to himself, a certain jealousy of his superiority, and of his success in life.

While, therefore, groaning, and with gloomy anticipations, he awaited the expected event, which in a

few days would, it appeared, take place, Ernest and Kate sat side by side, like two happy children, with a silver moonlight illuminating their hearts.

Many love gifts had already been exchanged between them, and the marriage day formed a subject of debate, but, nevertheless, the betrothal ring did not yet glisten on the finger of the bride elect.

Ernest had it, however, in his hand now ; it had travelled that morning with him, in the railway carriage, as he was wafted swiftly, though not as swiftly as either his thoughts or wishes, from his home to hers. Yes, the little satin-lined case he held, contained the important jewel ; but not yet, not yet he insisted, with mock gravity, could it be presented.

"Alas !" he continued, "how little can we foresee whether the brother Antony will permit it or not ! He who has become so rich and so great a man in the high world may indeed bring far different suitors for the hand of his fair sister, gentlemen of noble and exalted rank ; the poor Ernest may be despised, his love rejected, and, in short, the betrothal must just wait for Antony's consent ;" and Ernest concluded by saying that, "without that consent, it would be impossible for him to press his suit."

How cunningly and laughingly did Kate glance up into the sparkling eyes of her companion as he spoke, and then feigning humility said, that it was indeed probable that Antony might not consider so ungifted a bride worthy of such a bridegroom ; which sugges-

ton called forth, as may be divined, from the delighted Ernest, an eloquent flow of language; which being uttered in a very low voice we think it hardly honourable to repeat, and thus they played the time away as they bent over the book of etchings illustrating Schiller's beautiful song of the Bell, and Ernest explained, by snatches, the poetic argument of each picture.

They had now arrived at one, which attracted, more than any, the delighted gaze of Kathleen.

"Here indeed is portrayed a beautiful moment; let me understand it," and Ernest continued:—"It is night, and this shaded lamp gives a faint light in the cottage chamber. See, a tall, manly figure has entered, as it appears, unexpectedly. Here the elderly grey-bearded man bends forward, shading the light from his eyes with his hand, that he may the more distinctly discern the stranger, who with arms folded in his mantle, the cap drawn over his brow, stands erect before him. The wife looks round inquiringly, and with her foot gently pushing from her the distaff, turns the light of the lamp full upon the unknown one."

"Foolish woman, how can she hesitate a moment? It is her son!" cried Kathleen, excited with an enthusiastic interest in the subject so beautifully delineated. "Would I not recognise my Antony in a moment, did he stand thus before me?" Ernest sent the next leaf flashing past, and, lo! the same

scene lay before her ; but, as if the pencilled figures had caught life and moved of their own will, she now sees the father has started up with outstretched arms, the stranger, his mantle and cap thrown off, has sunk forward, and is clasped in the passionate embrace of the mother.

“ Oh, joy ! oh, happiness ! ” she exclaimed, “ how beautiful it must be to meet thus again ! Oh, when will he come ? when shall we thus embrace our Antony ? ”

“ Ah, when ! ” echoed an unknown voice behind her.

She sprang up and started round. A tall figure stood there with folded arms and head sunk upon his bosom to hide the eager smile as he looked with dark piercing eyes into her face, and verily this form appeared to have sprung into life by her own imagination, and was to her mind the exact representation of the stranger in the pictured group she had even now contemplated, and he was to her a stranger ; surely she had never before, but in the picture, seen that form !

The penetrating gaze of the unknown one seemed to reach even to her very soul ; he slowly lifted his face, so that the whole countenance gradually revealed itself to her. She screamed, ran forwards, and was clasped in his arms.

“ Dear, dear Antony ! ”

He pressed her fondly, closely, to his manly breast, and covered her cheeks with kisses.

Ernest, to whom evidently the sudden arrival was no surprise, helped the old man to rise from his seat, for in strong agitation he trembled from head to foot.

"Who, who?" he gasped, "not the boy, not Antony!"

"Your son, sir! It is your son."

Antony now rushed to his father; he bent down before the stooping figure. He knelt; he kissed the hands; he clasped the shaking knees; he looked upwards into the agitated countenance, with a tender and longing expression. Then the parent fell upon his neck, and wept, and sobbed aloud, "My son; my son. My own—own——" And then he gazed at him; and lifted him from the earth, and gazed at him again, while the words "Father! dear father!" broke, in low tones, from the pale lips of Antony. Now he led the enfeebled man to his seat, and knelt beside him, clasping his hand in his.

"Father, thy blessing."

"My son—already blest—how can earthly parent bring down a holier blessing upon you, than you have already earned?" he faltered slowly forth.

"May you continue ever—ever—abundantly blest."

"Ah! would that the poor ears could drink in those words!" exclaimed Kathleen.

"Thank Heaven for this moment. I have lived for such a moment through long—long—years," cried Antony. "Now, I should be content to die;" and he rose with a glow of love beaming on his

comely features, and kissed his father's forehead reverentially. And now the hand of Ernest was on his shoulder; he embraced him, called him his more than friend—his brother—his brother in every sense of the word; and then, with a glance towards Kathleen, that lighted up his face with sudden happiness, he sprang towards her, to catch her hand and place it in that of Ernest, and lay them together on the knee of the old man. There was another witness of the scene, who was scarcely noticed. Nurse stood there, having followed Antony, weeping with gladness.

But we must pause; the scene of this fair reunion must be no further described, lest we disclose that which must yet remain a mystery.

It was the brightest moment Antony had yet known, when, taking the hand of his blushing sister, he held it forth towards the friend to whom he loved with more than a brother's tenderness, that the betrothal ring might be placed upon it by him. It was then, that the three rejoicing hearts rung harmoniously in one full chord of love and gladness; whose tones, too rich to be fully breathed forth on earth, pealed upwards in their silence to the throne of heaven.

Oh! the return of one long absent and beloved, is an event fraught with a joy too deep for utterance. It is to this, that, from the moment the farewell is pronounced, the longing heart looks on, with fervent

desire, and with a hope which faints, revives, faints again and again,—revives many, many, times before its realisation.

“Meet again!” soul-soothing expectation!

“Meet again!” oh, rapturous words!

The star of “Meet again!” rises when the sun of love’s presence sets, and it guides us through the night of loneliness; sometimes clouded, sometimes lustrous. In storm, or calm, still—still—we watch that star; and not in vain, for its light is our encouragement, and is the brightest lamp that can illumine our dark way. With some of us, it shines till the dawn of joy rises and we once more embrace the beloved one. With others—ah! with how many!—that star glimmers on through a night as long and cold—as cold and long, as the winter night of the Icelander; and when, at length, morn unites the long-parted ones, lo! the dear star has melted away into the glare of the rising day, whose sun is the unsetting sun of eternity.

Happy Kathleen! Happy Ernest! That at the moment when life smiled most beautifully upon them, the brother, whose presence was so important to perfect their happiness, by sharing it, should be safely restored to them.

Glittering and bright, and swiftly too, as a sun-reflecting rivulet, flowed the summer time now for the happy lovers, while Antony looked smiling on, rejoicing that the happiness of the two beings dearer to him than any in the world, save

perhaps, one other, should be secured to them in their mutual love. For himself he appeared usually cheerful; his conversation was replete with anecdote and spirit, and the occupation of his life seemed to have engaged his entire interest, and to suit well the natural inclination of his mind, calling fully into exercise, as it did, the powers of a grasping intelligence.

But there were times when even his sister was struck by the expression of deep melancholy which clouded his whole appearance, when the cheek lost its flush, and became of an extreme pallor, and the spark of the eye seemed to have burned itself out. In a man of powerful frame, and, as it seemed, vigorous health, this was surprising to those few who remarked it, and unaccountable also. Kathleen alarmed herself, sometimes, with the thought that her brother suffered from some hidden malady; and the words that had escaped his lips on his first return, often resounded in her mind:—

“Now I should be content to die.”

These gloomy fits, however, seldom lasted long, and he was easily roused from them.

The father found himself most happily mistaken in his anticipated annoyance in his son's society.

The man of the world—the man who had already, though only in his twenty-sixth year, stood forth successfully among the great of the earth, and made for himself a prominent and honourable position, conducted himself towards his father, humbly, gently,

tenderly as a child ; asking and receiving his opinion or advice with reverence, and being obedient to every wish of his parent, seeking to discover his desires before they could present themselves in the form of a request.

With that sweet expression of inquiry, usually peculiar in children, Antony would frequently look into the countenance of his father, even as he remembered in his earliest days gazing into that of his mother ; and he thought of her—the good and beautiful spirit, with still that same longing and affection which had, in his childhood, filled his heart.

It had been arranged that the wedding of Ernest and Kathleen should be celebrated before the end of September ; but the joy with which they looked forward to the event was mingled with regret, since Antony had stated that it was his intention, after that time, to return and resume his diplomatic duties on the Continent.

We should not omit to mention, that shortly after his arrival in England, he had received a letter from Mr. Smith, who indeed had seldom entirely lost sight of him since they first met in Brussels. They had on various occasions fallen in each other's way, at different continental cities, and Mr. Smith had passed several months at Vienna, during Antony's residence there, and was then much in his society. Now, being in London, after travelling to various parts of England and Scotland, Mr. Smith had inquired of those who were acquainted with the young diplomatist's

movements, his address, and wrote, with his hearty greetings, the intelligence that he intended shortly visiting the neighbourhood of Cheltenham.

A week after this a note, brought by his own lacquey, announced to Antony that he had fulfilled his intention, and requested a visit from him, as he was prevented yet presenting himself to pay his respects to his old friend, Antony's father. He added, that his name might probably be unrecognised by Mr. Nayton, but that when they should meet, he flattered himself that the many years that had intervened since their parting, would not have disguised his person so severely as to prevent an old friend from recognising him. His stay at a neighbouring city would be protracted till after the musical fête, which would shortly be held there ; as he was one for whom music possessed so great a charm as to command his attention at all times, and his attendance also whenever a promise was held out of its being worthily performed.

At this fête Antony had resolved that his sister, and his aunts, as well as his father, should be present. But this intention of affording them so unusual an enjoyment, was for the present unrevealed.

How busy, deliciously busy, were the aunts concerning the preparations for the trousseau of their dear niece; and how lucky she was, thought Aunt Bess, for getting married before she was four-and-twenty.

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH TREATS OF A GLOOMY ANNIVERSARY AND A DISCLOSURE!

THERE are days in our lives which are connected by association so wonderfully with the past, that they bring it back to our minds with the vividness and exactitude of the present ; and we contemplate a day or an hour of some intense joy or sorrow—or an event, or a scene which has since powerfully affected our lives, through the microscopic lens of memory that magnifies into importance every item in the subject which, when we first witnessed it, passed before our eyes too swiftly for us to examine with minute attention. Sometimes the anniversary of a day which we have reason to remember well—sometimes a word in allusion to a past event—sometimes a visit to the spot where it was enacted, has the effect of awakening recollection from its slumber.

It was the first of these cases that now threw Antony into a trance, in which memory, with its wizard wand, conjured up to the magical mirror of his mind

a scene and a form reflected from the long, long past. The first of September could not pass him by without recalling to his thoughts the day of which it was the seventh anniversary, when he had bade adieu to the haunts and the loves of his childhood, and set out with but a heavy heart to begin that career which had proved so unexpectedly prosperous.

He sat alone in his study, for no one could disturb him when it was believed he was occupied in writing business letters. But he wrote not a word.

Kathleen had observed to Ernest that Antony was certainly unusually ill that morning, and it would appear that she was not mistaken, for leaving the contents of the portfolio he had opened scattered on the table, he cast himself upon the sofa as if painfully weary, and with his eyes closed, wandered away in thought far into the past.

Who has not known such moments when sacred recollections chase from us, for the while, the thought of the intervening times with all their joys and sorrows, and we fancy ourselves again what we were and where we were then?

Thus, also, the traveller, who revisits a locality formerly well known, forgets the thousand leagues he has since traversed, in the contemplation of well-remembered scenes; old associations spring up at every step and bear him company, and the distant time appears again actually the present.

From his reverie, Antony was roused by a touch upon the arm that he had thrown across his brow, and

he found the eyes of Ernest fixed anxiously upon him.

"Come, dear fellow, you have overwritten yourself; you want air and exercise; let us walk together!"

Antony laughed carelessly as he sprang up.

"You would find me but an unpleasant companion to-day, I fancy. Better take out the little Kate, if only the rain be past," he said, as he threw open the window and observed the landscape was dripping with the mist that had been falling during the afternoon.

"Nay, that is altogether out of the question, the dear aunts have carried her off up stairs to an interview with the dressmaker. You will understand, then, I have no chance of a peep at her pretty face again for another hour, which accordingly you and I must spend together, for I have some matters to discuss with you. But, first, let us despatch the letters, as it is nearly post time."

There were, however, none to send. Antony had sat, busily writing, late through the night, so that they had been ready for the first mail; and as Ernest glanced over the papers that lay on the table, (among which, an architectural design for an Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, was prominent,) Antony hastily gathered them together, as if to conceal them then, with an alarmed expression, looked upon the ground.

"What is lost?" asked Ernest, seeking also upon it.

"Nothing, nothing!" was the answer; and he presently lifted what he sought from beneath the table.

Ernest laughed heartily. "What, nothing but a dead flower? Why, I had expected a 100*l.* note was at stake; and is that *all*?"

"All!" said Antony, as he laid it carefully away in a pocket-book; "but did you say it was a dead flower? there you are mistaken: its petals are as bright and glossy as when they grew upon the parent stem, and will continue so as long as they exist."

"Ha! ha!—here indeed I have a peep into the *sanctum sanctorum*. The little temple dedicated to sentiment by my friend Antony. And, lo! a portrait! May I not be permitted to see it. Thus, perhaps, I may be introduced to the fair donor of the flower, which is so highly respected," said Ernest, staying Antony's hand as he would have closed the portfolio.

The portrait was drawn out from its hiding-place; it was merely a sketch of Percy Melville.

"Then was it my cousin gave you that flower?" asked the friend, as he examined the picture.

"No matter who!" was the somewhat impatient reply.

"You have been wonderfully successful here, Antony; the eyes wear that deep and calm expression which was so peculiar in his childhood, and during his most serious illness."

"It is drawn from memory, commemorating to me that night which can never be forgotten by me. The drawing that I made from the original is in the possession of his parents."

"And are they, as I understand, again abroad this summer?"

"I visited Carlsbad expressly to see them and Percy, on hearing of their arrival there. Percy was well and happy, and with that solemnity pervading his whole character, which impresses me with a feeling of respect that it is almost unnatural should be inspired by a boy of his age. He clung to me with that sweet affection which always so deeply touched me. But I mourned to observe that with the appearance of health he is sadly delicate; and his physician signified to me that though such a suspicion was not breathed to his parents, fears were entertained that many more years might not remain to him here."

"The poor boy!" murmured Ernest.

"Nay, rather let us deem those *favoured* who are early removed," said the other. "The climate which they breathe is worthy of our envy, dear friend. No clouds there, you know. I fancy that you, in your bridal happiness, brother, and I in my prosperity, are widely mistaken if we believe ourselves half as privileged as they."

They went out arm-in-arm; the mist was clearing away, and drops yet hung around like beadings of quicksilver from every blade and branch. Antony

stopped a few moments, looking at them attentively.

"Come, friend, where are your thoughts? not with your eyes, on that quick-hedge, as I guess. Let us have them."

"Well, then, honestly will I confess them; but you are indeed no magician—for mind and eyes were at that moment, in truth, playing at the same game—and I was moralising upon so ignoble a subject as a wet quick-branch. I have even found on it a little likeness of ourselves, of our own spiritual existence on this thorny hedge of a world. See you, how these suspended drops form themselves, enlarge, and then fall? Listen then! From heaven flows the mist of the divine breath down to the earth, whose cold touch condenses it. The immaterial changes into an element, too heavy, too contaminated by its alliance with earth, to rise of itself into the celestial space. It must then go through a further change, and assume a beautiful form, which can reflect in itself a whole heaven. See how, obeying this law, these liquid atoms grow into the perfect sphere we call a drop, when perfected to fall, as we fall, into the grave; and to rise—to rise when the Great Tomorrow dawns—and float among other brilliant clouds, attending on the everlasting sun."

"True, dear friend; and as little as is each drop, in comparison to the whole firmament, are we with regard to the universe, in the eyes of the Supreme," said Ernest.

"Ay, you understand me. And though so intensely little, each individual can become a perfect thing, sparkling with divine light. Mark, also, how much sooner some among them fall than others. May this not explain why some of us fall when we are young? because the spirit is already perfected—only more swiftly than others?"

"Yes, some few may be so!" returned the other.

They wandered on together, in silence, between the trees, through the branches of which the sun, now unclouded, peeped in upon them brightly, and with genial warmth.

"There are yet other thoughts of yours, Antony, that I would be acquainted with," said the other, as they reached the shores of the pond; and stood looking into the waters, through which happy little particles of animal life shot to and fro swiftly, peopling the element as thoughts do the mind. "Dear brother, you are ill—you are suffering, and you have been so for a long period without disclosing it to me; this was not kind."

Antony laughed, replying gaily, "Let not the dear fellow alarm himself; here is no patient who need request his valuable counsel."

"You will not thus silence my inquiries, Antony," said the other gravely, and there was a pause for some moments.

Antony was leaning against the stem of the ash-tree that overshadowed them.

"Of what good would it be to me or you, Ernest,

if I were to confess that I have almost all my life suffered from a malady of the heart—which, though it cannot be cured, does not threaten to affect in any degree the health or the life of the sufferer?" and he smiled significantly as he spoke.

"I understand you. Dear brother, you are unhappy. Permit me the privilege of friendship, to share your sorrow. I have been aware that you suffered ever since your return, and even before; and if you knew how deeply this knowledge had pained me, you would permit me to endeavour to alleviate your sadness by sympathy."

"Ernest, believe me, no sympathy can extract the sting from this wound," began the other, eagerly; and laying his hand upon his friend's arm, "do not attempt it, leave it there undisturbed. Probing will only irritate, it cannot give relief."

"Nay, brother, let the poisoned stream flow out, and you will indeed find comfort."

"It will not, it cannot flow—it is stagnant; nothing can remove it," he cried, impatiently. "Do not speak to me of this," and he walked on, Ernest, however, still beside him.

"You do not understand that my own happiness loses much of its enjoyment for me by the thought of your suffering, and of the mystery that is around you. What am I to believe, what am I to imagine can be the cause? You declare also that it is irremediable."

"Ernest, I deserve not your sympathy or your

love. I deserve nothing that I enjoy, for I sin daily, hourly, constantly ; I am sinning, even now, fearfully, against the Divine Giver of all."

"Sinning—what do you mean? And yet that certainly we have all reason to confess."

"But I, more than all; for the sin of ingratitude is on my soul and oppresses it heavily—heavily. Nearly all that I could in reason desire has been granted me; and yet I demand more. Is not this ingratitude? More than I asked has been given, and yet the one thing denied is still longed for, though utterly unattainable, and life seems worthless and uncared for without it. Is not this ingratitude?"

"But is it indeed unattainable, dear friend? Let us strive together to bring it within your reach."

"Impossible! no person, no circumstance can give me back the talisman of enjoying life. It is gone—gone, and I deserve it not. See how the desires, and aims, and prayers of my very childhood have been fulfilled. See my father in comfort—my sister happy—and Ernest made my brother. Hopes I had hardly dared to form have become realities. You would say, the whole world would say, pointing to me, 'Behold a man favoured of Heaven! Behold one of the happiest and most fortunate on earth!' Know then, Ernest, that I am miserable; that my successful struggles into life, that the gold I have won and eagerly clutched, that the honourable position to which I have attained, that even the witnessing the happiness of those dear to me, all—all—are

utterly unable to satisfy my soul. I am haunted by the wild raging of an inward and passionate pain, which time cannot deaden. There is a gnawing in my heart which destroys every bud of pleasure ere it can blossom. Murmurings and complaint are ever resounding in my spirit with melancholy tones, silencing by their loud discords that voice of praise for mercies so undeservedly showered on me, which should rise as the breath of incense unceasingly to Heaven."

"Dear friend," began Ernest, bewildered with Antony's unrestrained vehemence, and hardly knowing what to answer him, "Dear friend, we will hope; it may be that with change of scene and thought you may be enabled to shake this from you."

"Shake it from me!" cried the other, as if angrily. "You know it not. I have striven, I have resolved to tear it from me, though my heart should be at the root. But in vain; it can be rent away only with life." He walked quickly on, and sprang into the fishing boat that was moored to shore. Ernest followed and sat down in it with him, while he remained for some minutes with folded arms and head sunk upon his breast, silent and thoughtful.

He was calmer—he appeared struggling with more success to curb the passion which had stamped itself on every word and motion, and his voice was less agitated as he spoke presently.

"I cannot describe to you, dear brother, how pain-

ful to me is the thought of resuming my duties abroad, which I must do in a few weeks; and yet I have felt more miserable in my own country than when in the excitement of finding myself among foreigners."

"Throw aside, then, your employment for the present at least. It appears to me this is the result of over-exerting the mind. What you require is a calm life, gladdened by love and domestic enjoyment. Remain in England. You will presently become reconciled to the change. You will, perhaps, form happy interests and new ties here."

"Never!" he interrupted hastily; "say not a word more of this," and tears started to his eyes. "But, dear friend, I have been guilty of folly. Pardon me, I have betrayed myself to you. You must despise me. You must deem me mad to have spoken as I have, but, believe me, it is only at times that I become thus foolish. I am, indeed, not always murmuring and discontented, but have within me a high sense of the blessings bestowed on me. There are intervals, as you have learned, when the pain, the woe, which I have confessed to you overwhelms my spirit. But, Ernest, think no more of this, forget it, let it not distress you. Remember, we must all suffer—every man must have his grief. This is mine. So keenly sensitive is my nature to happiness, that, perhaps I need this subduing influence. I submit, then, with *satisfaction*. But resignation, though it aids us to support, cannot avert trial. And, after all, what

matters it, if this point of our existence be clouded ? The Eternal Sun shines ever beyond, and will soon again beam gloriously upon us."

Antony was silent, then held out his hand to his friend.

"I blame myself highly, Ernest, for having betrayed to you what I have. Forget it, I entreat of you—forget this conversation."

"Was it not entirely my own act, Antony ? I therefore should be blamed for extracting from you this confession."

"Nay, but I was weak—weak as a woman. Nay, here again I am wrong ; I cannot deserve a comparison with so noble a being as woman, for it seems to me that it is her characteristic to endure, with more beautiful and with stronger patience, and with more cheerfulness also, than we do, Ernest. So unselfish is she, always devoting her life and her love to the interests of others."

"Ha ! ha ! This eulogy on woman has indeed brought us to the point, and let it bring you to an unreserved confession ; for I indeed guess that it is no other than a lady that has inflicted the wound from which my brother Antony suffers. Come, come, tell me all,—a proud Viennese lady, or, perhaps, a fair maid of the Alps, and by her hand the purple flower, so carefully preserved, was bestowed. I am right. I knew it."

Antony made no reply, as he stretched himself

along upon the bench, and leant his head upon his hand, his elbow resting on the boat's edge.

He looked musingly across the silvery water which lay around them, and a sunny light cast a poetic radiance on them, and on the whole scene, as Antony began to speak calmly, and almost in musical tones, which as he proceeded became more and more agitated, till they grew into passionate energy.

"I will tell you a tale then, a tale which is perhaps an old one, and has been acted and related over and over again, in all ages and in all nations.

"There was a motherless child, to whom life was all loneliness,—whom desolation had enwrought within her cold embrace ;—a boy whose spirit longed to love, and be beloved again, whom nature had marked out as one whose longings should be vain. In his young years, he learnt to crush each impulse as it rose ;—his childhood had not known the halo glowing hope bestows. 'Twas then a little high-born maiden looked on the humble child—with smiles that angels love to see, upon the boy she smiled ; then life grew fair for him, he felt that he was led along by her bright spirit, through the maze, as by an Ariel's song. Soon broke the dawn of youth, with all its blaze of burning power ; now he must be a man, *she*—was an Eden perfect flower. Oh! that maiden! she was beautiful as beautiful could be! The fondness of his childhood turned to love's own ecstasy. He loved her in his

deepest heart, and in his loftiest thought; he loved as man never loved before, and loved her, hoping not. He was too poor and lowly such a star of heaven to win, and not a word he spoke to any of the fire within, that, vainly, he had wished to quench, and hardly could control,—that would not die away, but made a desert of his soul. And then he bade her long farewell, and sought his dawning fate;—she taught him, 'tis a *divine* ambition makes the owner great: and he went forth with holy longings into worldly strife, and prayers she breathed for him called down a blessing on his life. And she was wedded to another, and the years went slowly by. Ah! he was forlorn,—his heart was torn; he longed, he longed to die! There was no rest in his aching breast, where echoed his wild, wild sigh, he loves her e'en more than in days of yore—he loves to *eternity!*"

With the last words, he had sprung up in the boat, and one hand was raised heavenwards; there was despair in his whole mien. Ernest would have caught his arm, as he cried, "Ah! it was Nina, Nina!" but Antony leaped on shore, and waving his hand once to him, walked hastily away. The boat rocked to and fro, angrily, after the sudden motion; and the water was scattered in light spray over Ernest; but his head was buried in his hands, and he was plunged in sorrow.

"Generous and tried friend! and he loved her

with his whole soul; and yet, I believe he desired and hoped that I might win her. Alas! this grief can have no end for him."

With Antony, it was not as with most men, to whom their early love is either as a pretty pleasing dream, or a foolish one; who, perhaps, in after years, smile half contemptuously at themselves as they recall it to their recollection. With Antony, it was no dream; with the deaf youth, locked out from the cheering and beneficial influences of many friendships or relationships, this love, in which that of sister, friend, adviser, and thoughtful companion, were united in one all-powerful passion, growing up in childhood, perfected in its fulness in youth, and confirmed in advancing years, had so absorbed the entire affections, that it was evident, the plant thus deeply rooted, could not, while life lasted, be torn away.

As Ernest contemplated this tale of beautiful but unhappy affection, the thought suddenly entered his mind. "And Nina—did she not in truth love Antony?" Again and again did sighs and grief burst from him, as the loving friend pondered on his brother's sorrow, and that of the beautiful maiden whom he too, had once loved.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MUSICAL EPIC POEM.—A RECOGNITION.

ROUSSEAU asks "What is a sonata?"

Könner answers, "A romance!"

We will suggest, "A poem;" and, at the same time, enquire what is a sonata, or a romance, or a poem, without a lively movement at the close?

"At the close!" exclaim my readers, with rapture, "and has our author indeed the intention of bringing his tale to a close at last? We had begun to fear that so desirable an event was not to take place till eternity should come to a close. Most welcome, sir, will be your finale! Now for it, let us start off in the allegro—strike up—vivace—let the fiddles begin and the trumpets prepare for the triumphant gallop which will be the conclusion of our poem."

But, dear readers, remember the motto of our tale is, "Patience, patience!" The termination of the sonata consists of three parts, and, as in that

of Beethoven, No. 3, op. 29, where the allegretto is followed by the most touching and harmonious menuetto, before the final burst of swift sounds dash powerfully on the ear, so now we have some moderate measure of thrilling harmony before our last livelier tones are given forth.

“Patience!” then, let us repeat, with yet a few more words of our motto, “Time brings relief;” yes, even to you—poor weary readers!

What town or city in merry England, or, indeed, in all Europe, but knows what it is to have a gala-day! a day which it may consider as peculiarly its own, when its every street may grin and be gay (have you never seen a street look as if it verily were grinning?); when all the tradesmen’s wives may put on their best clothes, and make themselves finer than even on Sundays, now, too, having a gayer background of shop windows than then, when all the school children of high or low rank may be treated with half a holiday, and the grocers, linendrapers, and all the rest of the “*influential gentlemen*” of the place may meet for a good dinner, and eat and drink till they have eaten and drank themselves into such excessive good humour with one another, as well as with themselves, that they are inspired to make eloquent speeches, and pay each other high compliments, with all their hearts.

The first great gala-day of all Christendom is,

indeed, Christmas-day, but there are for individual communities little separate distinct gala-days also.

In some towns, these are the election days ; with others, days that some good old time-honoured custom has dressed up in gorgeous mummeries,—such is the “Lord Mayor’s day,” in the greatest town of all.

In foreign lands, the saint’s day of each hamlet is a holiday, and here also our villages have their fête days; to them it comes round with a cricket club, or the anniversary meeting of some popular society, or when the pastor or squire holds a flower fête, and assembles nobles and gentry of the district in order to witness and reward the industry of the poor man, who has cultivated successfully his roses or his turnips.

Well, a gala time now came round for the dear old city of Glevum, but it was not on the occasion of an election, or a procession, or show, and it was to last, not for one day only, but for a week; it was on the occasion of a grand musical festival—so all the printed placards scattered over the town tell us—a festival which, at stated times, had, during more than a hundred and twenty years, come round to that ancient city, and was always hailed by the inhabitants, and enjoyed when it arrived, and looked forward to with pleasurable expectation (as again to return in the space of a small cluster of years) so soon as it was past.

For then Glevum was all alive, every shop put on its gayest and most fascinating aspect, the neighbouring noble and gentlemen's families flocked to the town, every hotel and house was full, and the railroad now brought hundreds more than ever came in the good old times to purchase tickets and eat dinners. This festival was for a charitable purpose, one of those institutions so characteristic of the English, who love to do benevolent actions, but at the same time desire to perform them in the pleasantest manner possible to themselves. The results of the festival were to be given to support distressed and bereaved persons; and who but would willingly yield some drop from their gold fountain, however shallow that fountain might be, for so excellent a purpose? So every one who came to purchase his ticket felt that he thus furthered a good end, and as he paid down his money had the satisfaction of thinking, also—"I am now about to enjoy myself!"

The bells of the churches rang merrily on the second morning of the fête, and the Cathedral lifted aloft into a pure and cloudless Heaven its beautiful light, perforated tower, one of the finest-proportioned and stateliest that England boasts, and its deep bells boomed forth with a solemn grandeur that thrilled the hearts of many a listener, and told them if they should assemble beneath its venerable aisles for enjoyment, that enjoyment must be of a holy and spiritual nature, and that the sacred concords which

were presently to resound majestically in their ears, must be received with reverence into the soul, and there condensed into a true devotion, that should help to purify the whole inward being.

Banners stream forth into the morning air, the steps of numerous pedestrians hasten to and fro, carriages roll swiftly along, and the ancient town vibrates again with the noise and motion of its excited population, among which we may include the family of the Naytons, for Antony had carried out his design of providing this pleasure for them and for his aunts, who now found themselves transplanted, for a few merry days, to the house he had hired for the occasion, in this city.

His first act, on his arrival, was to seek out the good-natured friend, Mr. Smith, and introduce to him his sister. He found him occupying apartments closely adjoining the Cathedral, in the absence of one of the prebends, to whom they belonged, and who, being a personal friend of Mr. Smith, had requested he would make use of them, while he was unavoidably engaged elsewhere.

The old gentleman received Antony and Kate with unfeigned pleasure; there were even tears in his eyes, as he pressed the hand of the young lady, and looked earnestly into her face.

"Yes, my dear sir, Miss Nayton recalls to me something of the dear lady's form and stature," he said, musingly.

"Do you mean of my mother's, sir?" asked Kathleen. "I think Antony has told me you once saw her."

The old man smiled.

"He was not wrong. Once? Yes, yes, I could guess you were her daughter; but your brother resembles that most excellent and perfect of women, both in nature and appearance, in such a degree, it is to me as if she lived again in him."

Kate thought it surprising he should so well remember her, and the conversation was now changed.

Mr. Smith was pressing in his request that Antony, with his sister and Ernest, should attend his small evening party that night, when he hoped to assemble several families, with whom formerly he was familiarly acquainted, and whom he had been agreeably surprised to find brought together by the fête. The invitation could not be refused.

"You have told me your father is not strong enough to venture out, in night-air; so, instead of pressing his attendance to-night, I will promise to wait upon him, myself, to-morrow morning," said Mr. Smith, as he shook hands with them, on their taking leave. "Did I mention to you that I have seen something of your old acquaintances, the Darcys, latterly?"

Antony started, as one who is not deaf, starts, when a cannon is fired behind him. Kathleen was

delighted, and asked many questions concerning the charming Lady Darcy, and how it had occurred that he had seen her.

It was explained that the country-seat of Lord Darcy was in the neighbourhood of this town; that Mr. Smith having, during his travels in Scotland, renewed his acquaintance with Sir William Allingworth, had met there his son-in-law, as the young nobleman preferred the sports offered by that country, to those he found in the south, and was therefore but seldom at his own seat; that, however, the family was at present residing there; and that Sir William was now on a visit to his son-in-law.

Antony went home plunged in a reverie, from which, however, he was shortly roused, by Kate and Ernest summoning him to accompany their party to the Cathedral.

The crowd assembles within the nave of the holy edifice; gradually the avenue of gigantic Norman pillars, supporting the clustering architecture of the highly vaulted roof, becomes filled with people, who, taking their seats upon the benches, sit silently awaiting the burst of harmony which is shortly to resound from the organ, and the orchestra surrounding it. Now come the dignitaries of the Cathedral and of the city, and take their places in the seats reserved for them. Now appear the stewards of the festival, holding the wands and wearing the badge of their office, and leading on

such friends as they desire to accommodate with the best seats at their disposal.

Beautiful and elegantly-attired ladies are among them. One form must, of all these, particularly attract our attention. We look, and as she passes, turn to look again, at that tall figure, at the well-proportioned head and graceful neck. See! the profile of the fair face is now turned to us; its Grecian outline is of no common cast. The hazel eye, with its calm light; the lid sweeping, when it falls, the delicate cheek with its silken fringe; the rich brown of the braided hair; the full curve of the nether lip; the graceful dignity remarkable in every motion, are surely not unknown to us. Can it be the Lady Darcy? Do we not recognise the Nina Allingworth of former days?

Gentlemen, seated on either side of her, seek to engage her attention, or draw her into conversation, but unsuccessfully; her interest is evidently already absorbed.

Further down in the Cathedral we discern Kathleen Nayton, with her father and Ernest. Let us glance along the mass of countenances which everywhere presents itself to us. How varied is the form and expression of these upturned faces, by which we learn how various also are the feelings and thoughts within.

- In some we read indifference; in others we observe the wandering eye, demanding admiration, and

seeking to kindle it by its own cold lustre ; on some rests the quiet, pleased smile of childlike expectation ; others appear absorbed in thoughts of self and self-approbation ; but many minds seem already swelling with those solemn emotions which the holy place and the object before them most naturally call forth.

We remark one gentleman yonder, at the farther end of a bench, and half hidden by the pillar against which he leans his head, whose presence here causes us surprise. What does Antony in such a scene ? my reader asks. Why should the deaf one, to whose soul the floodgates of harmony are locked ; whose heart is deadened to the touch of melody, and knows not even the dear influence of home voices—why is it that he has entered these walls, through which divine poetry is about to thrill with powerful eloquence ? Poor Antony ! let him alone there. May he not desire, while a thousand spirits throb in unison with that one mighty voice, to follow them in fancy ? to sympathise with them in the depths of thought ? to *feel* the vibrations that others hear ? and to enjoy his strange solitude in this crowd of his fellow-men ?

Hark ! the Oratorio begins—it is that of “Elijah.” The prophet of God denounces Israel in solemn tones. The music of the overture rushes upon us. The organ and the numerous instruments fill the edifice with their loud voices.

Antony trembles from head to foot, as when thunder formerly thrilled through his whole being.

Nina listened intently, and with all the sensitiveness of her earnest nature concentrated on the subject.

The mighty picture, painted by the genius of Mendelssohn Bartholdy, is now about to be presented to us. We listen with reverential attention to the grand creation, or rather to the translation into the language of harmony of the sublime Ideal of his soul.

The great master saw before him, in the prophet of Israel, the sacred nobility which adorns the man, who, serving his God in fidelity and honour, is by him beloved and favoured; and the artist resolved to impart to the world a sense of the majesty of such a character. And are not such contemplations calculated to better and elevate mankind? - With the devout faith of Elijah, the profaneness of the heathen is contrasted; the woes and weariness of the man of God, who is persecuted by his country, and oppressed by an acute sense of its sinfulness, receives alleviation from divine comforters; and the success and triumph of the holy cause is followed by the prophet being lifted up to the gates of heaven. Listen, then, to the eloquent tale related by immortal Music, with her hundred soul-piercing tongues.

She tells, and in telling paints before you, that the land is faint with famine; "the deeps afford no

water ;" "infant children ask for bread, and there is no one breaketh it to feed them !"

The Lord calls Zion to repentance, to forsake her idols, and truly seek Him. Now we follow Elijah to Cherith's brook, and angel voices fill the atmosphere around, and raise his sinking soul.

Now to the widow's home — and the mother's pitiful appeal is for her dying son ; in touching accents flows the utterance of her woe, for there is now "no breath left in him." Elijah prays the spirit may return. The mother's despair thrills the heart. He prays—and yet again ; a pause, and then the light arpeggio steals upon the ear, and sweet *Æolian* instruments, now for the first time sounding, tell of hope and life. The rapture of praise bursts from the mother, for "the soul of her son reviveth."

Now go we forth to the sacrifice. With the four hundred men of Baal, and the one man of God, we stand on Carmel.

The priests of the heathen call on their gods for fire, and the character of the music springs from the sacred tones of devotion to a clash as of bacchanalian voices, to a profane shout, that bursts on, louder and louder, discordant to the mind from contrast with the single and earnest voice of the holy one, but to the ear, ever in harmony.

See! the fire descends—it burns—the prophet triumphs !

Then must he invoke mercy on the thirsty earth.

Who can forget the scene so delicately and highly tinted by the pencil of sound, when we see Elijah supplicating for his people in an agony of earnestness ! We see the child, at his bidding, go up and look towards the sea ; and the liquid soprano notes, with the mournful words, " There is nothing ; the earth is as brass before me," toll with bell-like beauty into the innermost sense. Again and again the man of faith uplifts his prayer. Again and again the plaintive voice of the child thrills us as with despair. How loud, how wildly agitated, how intensely he implores, " Be not thou silent to me !" " Help ! oh, my rock !"

And now, " Behold a little cloud ariseth from the waters, like a man's hand." The prayer is heard. " The heavens are black with clouds." The desired rain is at hand, and the voice of praise resounds, and resounds majestically, even above the gathering storm. The wild orchestral accompaniment rolls with increasing power, and we mark with awe the increasing grandeur of the scene ; the assembling of the clouds, the raging of the tempest, the pelting rain, the torrents meeting from the heaven and earth, the rush, the gush, the breaking of the downward crashing waters. Masses of concords thus astound the ear, and pursuing one another in and out of every crevice and nook in the wide and lofty edifice, are echoed to and fro, till it would seem Music has given a voice to every stone in all that giant structure.

And the first part is closed.

Music, thou art the wonderful essence of the divinest part of man's intelligence ! Beautiful science ! taught by nature to man ! Of a vast range, yet concentrated into that little focus, the ear ; of so unearthly a nature that, like a ray of the sun that unites, as by a golden thread, earth and sky, thy tones are, for the soul, a link between it and heaven ! Beautiful art ! enwrap and hidden in thy mysterious nature, and revealed but to a privileged few of those that love thee ! Divine themes find no voice so fit to give them utterance as thine ! Thus it is the words now pronounced penetrate our hearts so powerfully.

"Thus saith the Lord, 'I am he that comforteth ; be not afraid, thy help is near.'"

Elijah, persecuted and pursued, lies down prepared to die. Grief is in his soul. Now peal out the pure tones of angels, "Lift thine eyes to the mountains, whence cometh help."

And if there be one aching heart in all that crowd of listeners, or if there be a thousand, let them take comfort from the never-to-be-forgotten tones that here move softly through the air :—

"O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him."

Lo ! night approaches—we hear it gloomily gathering. It is the night when the glory of the Lord will appear to the prophet. Lo ! the stormy wind and the earthquake, in which the Lord was not ; and then the fire in which He was not ; and then the

still small voice, which is a silence—a silence—and in that silence “onward came the Lord.”

And angels sing above him, and Elijah is comforted.

Then, finally, in the mighty roar of the gathering whirlwind, he is borne on the chariot of fire, far above the woe which has made his spirit faint, and the death which all other children of nature are doomed to suffer, far, far aloft to the land of his divine and everlasting rest.

As the last notes of the Oratorio died away, a little procession of the stewards and their ladies moved down the centre nave towards the porch.

Antony's dark eyes, flashing with an unwonted fire, were directed across the building. He had not, however, yet observed the slight motion in the crowd, so deeply was he absorbed in his own thoughts, when suddenly an image, crossing the retina of the eye, marked itself there as if instinctively, and shot so vividly to the brain; that starting from his meditation, he looked intently upon it—for it was Nina who moved slowly through the crowd. She was looking forwards, and passed on unconscious of his gaze, which was rivetted upon her, until she was lost to view. Then he turned away his head, withdrew again behind the pillar, and again pressed to its cold surface a throbbing brow, and a cheek which had become quickly flushed at the recognition.

“It is enough. I have seen her once more! and

she is the same. I knew it—and I know it—ever the same !”

By slow degrees the crowd quitted the nave through the single exit at the door of the south porch, and here all had to pass the avenue of ladies, who were appointed to hold the alms-plates, containing the contributions of the congregation.

Their faces were happy, and glowing with animation; smiles passed from one to another, and brilliant friendly eyes exchanged glances with those they recognised in the stream of people. Nina was one among the ladies appointed to the charitable office, and stood in the gay ranks as animated and smiling as the rest.

Smiling,—yes; and yet hers was a different smile to those floating around her; it was a smile which, to a close observer, and one well acquainted with human hearts, would have told a long tale, and yet one which can be implied in few words. In deep and sensitive natures, Serenity is the offspring of Sadness, and her smile is one of heavenly radiance. Such was Nina’s.

As the company approached in order to pass her, a tall, manly figure, and handsome countenance, attracted her attention for a moment; by the next, a strange and vague feeling of interest had fixed it upon him; a dreamy feeling of she knew not what, but in another moment a thrill had shot through her whole frame; a flood of memories had gushed upon

her heart, and thoughts, and longings, hopes, and fears, and fancies, such as she had believed long, long ago, not only banished, but destroyed, flew back, uttering their loud cries for an admittance there within.

It is he—it must be Antony! Oh, that he might look up! Oh, that he would see her! He approaches—he will pass her by, and not even look upon her! Oh, those sad eyes, why—why are they fixed upon the ground? Antony, Antony, look up before it is too late, and meet that kind and long-loved gaze!

But, no! with folded arms, and eyes upon the ground, he passed on as the crowd wafted him; he is now even stepping before her, and sees her not, only mechanically drops into her plate his gold coin, and is borne on. She might then have whispered his name, or addressed him; but she remembered *by him* her voice would have been unheard, and she watched him till he was beyond the porch—gone—gone! She saw no more, she trembled, so that she could with difficulty conceal her emotion or retain her post; she ceased to care to watch the tide of the company. With downward-bent head she stood now no longer prominent among her less beautiful companions; and Kate and Ernest, busy with one another, passed her by with others of her friends, unconscious of her presence, as she of theirs.

The incident which had produced so immediate a

change in her appeared so strange, she began to think it the result of her own fancy ; for what had the deaf Antony to do there ? She had heard of him as in distant lands ; how was it possible that any interest here could have attraction for him, or, indeed, how could she rely on her recognition of one she had not seen for many years, and who must be greatly changed ? So she would strive not to believe in that which was perhaps but a delusion. She would think the stranger was indeed a stranger, and that her excited fancy had deceived her, and yet the mysterious vision hovered irresistibly around, within her.

Antony, as he stepped out from beneath the elaborately ornamented porch, observed Mr. Smith occupied in examining the richly-panelled structure, which, with its walls decorated with niches and pierced with windows, forms an object of great beauty and interest. Antony found himself detained here by the pleased old gentleman, as he pointed out to him the peculiarities of the erection.

“ You will not fail me to-night ? ” said Mr. Smith, when at length they parted.

“ Pardon me for the inquiry, but do you expect the Lady Darcy will be with you ? ” asked Antony, quickly.

“ Indeed, my dear young friend, she is a lady whom I could scarcely venture to invite. I fancy also, that she leaves the town before evening to rejoin her lord, and to receive company at her own house.”

"Thank you; it is well. We will not fail you this evening," said the other; and acknowledging the animated smile and nod bestowed on him by the old gentleman, and the good-humoured twinkle of his clear, blue eye, Antony turned to follow his own party, who were now far in advance.

"Did you observe my kind friend, the gentleman with whom I was then speaking?" asked Antony, of his father and his aunts, as he rejoined them; but the former was becoming so shortsighted, he said, that he had not been able to find even Antony in the crowd coming from the porch; and Miss Bess acknowledged, with an affectionate glance at her godson, that her attention could not but be fixed on her dear nephew, rather than on the stranger whom he had addressed; while Miss Joan declared she had seen quite enough in that moment of this Mr. Smith to know he was a downright Englishman, and she had no wish that the acquaintanceship should proceed further; for who, but so rude a creature as John Bull, would turn his back upon a party of ladies as that old gentleman had done—so pointedly, that she had even taken it as a personal offence?

CHAPTER IX.

NIGHT.—THE CLIMAX.

NIGHT came—the gay, happy night, so inviting to many ; to us, also, since it may perhaps call forth a more final development of our work ; to you, also, dear readers, as you are doubtless panting for the catastrophe.

The public concert, held in the Shire Hall, was crowded ; the stewards were all activity, the performers in good humour as well as in good voice ; Mademoiselle A—— was thrilling, our native songstress Madame C. A——, charming, Herr S——, a startling and most melodious Polypheme, the audience smiled and applauded, and when satisfied with encores flocked away down the broad staircases from the scenes of concord, recently enjoyed, to that of discord, which awaited them in the street, in the confusion, bustle, and noise of the medley of carriages. Then came the rushing of many ladies and gentlemen

homewards, in the fine starry night, where the moon was already beginning to exert her influence, and the rolling of vehicles over the rattling stones, to and fro, hither and thither, making the old houses tremble to their foundations.

It was late when Antony with his sister and Ernest arrived at the apartments of Mr. Smith. They found the greater part of his guests had already arrived ; for while several had proceeded thither immediately on quitting the concert, Antony had been employed in performing a dutiful and charitable part towards his good aunts, rescuing them first from the crowd, then the turban of Miss Joan, which had become disengaged from her head, then the fly, containing these ladies, from the crush of vehicles, and lastly, himself from their company ; he having placed them in safety at home, before a good supper, at which his father was not too wearied by his fatigues in the early part of the day to preside.

Mr. Smith appeared unusually animated, and eagerly snatched the hand of Antony as he entered, saying that he had been long expecting them ; that he could not be happy till they had arrived ; that he had been quite uneasy at not sooner having near him his dear young friends—the dearest he had. He welcomed Ernest also heartily, talked of the time when they had first met in Brussels, and of the changes that had taken place since then, in each of them ;

then glancing towards the blooming Kathleen, pointed to her, and whispered Ernest he thought him the luckiest young man in England at present; adding—"There is but one other in the country, Doctor Forsythe, whom I could wish to be more fortunate, and I shall be vastly disappointed if he do not become so, before another sunrise."

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled, as he observed with amusement the surprise his mysterious words had occasioned his auditors. "And here are some enchanting harmonies going on in the next room," he continued, "to which doubtless your young ears would gladly listen uninterruptedly, if my old voice would permit them; for in truth the lady is a sweet singer, and her artless and touching lays are to me an exquisite refreshment after the vociferations of those foreigners, that all the world has been gathering together to hear; but, my dears, I have yet some few words to address to you," and he laid his hand on the arm of Antony, as he looked hesitatingly from him to Kate, and continued with some signs of agitation,

"I would say that if—if—you should, during the evening, hear me addressed or spoken of by another name than Smith, do not be surprised, for though I acknowledge you are the closest friends I have in these rooms, yet you will perhaps find—you do not—altogether—yet—know me!"

And then, without waiting to hear the inquiries and expressions of astonishment which followed his

strange communication, he hurried on, addressed some other of his guests, and passed into the next room.

Antony, leaving the happy playmates, Ernest and Kate, actively employed in amusing one another, had passed on into the adjoining apartment. Here he stood, motionless as a monument, while he gazed upon the face of the singer, who, accompanying herself on a small piano at the opposite end of the room, sat with eyes half cast down, singing in sweet and expressive tones an Italian barcarole. Antony was surprised to find Mr. Smith at his elbow.

"She is a divine singer, and a beautiful young woman," observed the host, with a penetrating look at him to whom the words were addressed.

Antony bit his lip, as, struggling to conceal the strong agitation which thrilled through his whole being; and desirous to avoid the scrutinizing gaze of the speaker, he moved forward a few steps among the company, who sat round listening with attention; but Mr. Smith was again beside him.

"I thought, sir, I had understood from you—that—Lady Darcy would not be here to-night," muttered Antony, in a low voice.

"Certainly; I did not venture to request such an honour from my lady. She left town this afternoon." Antony looked doubtfully into his face, and asked with surprise:—

"Is it possible you do not know she is now before you?"

"No, no; her sister—not her ladyship," said the other, smiling. "Our enchantress is, you know, Miss Allingworth; Lady Darcy, the younger sister, is not to be compared to her."

"How! What! what do you mean?" gasped the other, catching convulsively at the arm of his friend, and starting back as if suddenly stung by a hornet; he, in this strange movement, came in contact with a row of ladies seated close behind him, trod with his heel upon the toe of a venerable dowager, and with his elbow knocked the fan out of the hand of her daughter sitting beside her; the ladies sprang up, and pushed back the chairs angrily. Mr. Smith stooped to raise the fan, with an apology; the whole row of ladies darted a volley of fiery glances at the bewildered Antony; he, half alarmed, half unconscious of whether the ladies, or Mr. Smith, deserved blame for the undefined mischief, which, it appeared probable had been perpetrated, bowed, endeavoured to smile, and say, "it was of no consequence;" "no apology was required;" "begged they would not mention it;" "no inconvenience to him!" while Mr. Smith, whose laughter could hardly be suppressed, succeeded, at length, in calming his discomposed guests; and then, taking Antony's arm, led him away to the embrasure of the

window, whence his dark eyes still flashed towards her, whom, he now learnt, still bore the name of Allingworth.

Her song was over; but as she was about to rise from the piano, those, who stood round and beside her in admiring attention, pressed her to remain. Bowing her graceful head, however, in acknowledgment of the compliment, she moved away to the nearest seat; but no other lady was led to that she had vacated.

"Have you not seen Sir W.? He is here to night, and Lady Allingworth," began Mr. Smith, in the window recess, to Antony.

"Whom should I see, but her? Tell me—tell me—if I am alive; or, if this is a mad dream of mine. How is it happening?"

"In a few words, then, the reason I can venture to invite Miss Allingworth, with her honoured parents, though not Lady Darcy, is, that I know better, and admire more the elder than the younger sister. They are, besides, lodging in the city for this week, I have lived in her father's house in Scotland for some months, at various times latterly, as Miss Allingworth, who had, it seems, for some years contracted a distaste for London seasons and court balls, persuaded her parents to give up, on her sister's marriage, the gay life which, for her own sake, they would otherwise have continued to lead, and has since lived in a remote but beautiful spot

of Scotland, not 'wasting her sweetness on the desert air,' but, whilst her father was as happy as a king among his domains rich in grouse and deer, occupying herself in benefiting all classes of people round her; being to the poor, the angel of benevolence, and making herself happy, by rendering others so. Antony, give me your attention; be not impatient. I should inform you, that I mentioned you occasionally to her, but the great feature of your life, the most important, I left untold. I thought I thus served you best. Do you understand?"

Antony grasped his hand fervently with both his own.

"Dear, best of friends!" he exclaimed.

"Be calm: remember we are not alone!" said the other, smiling, "remain here, do not startle our nightingale, or we shall have no more singing to-night; remain here just at present," and he added as he turned away with his twinkling eyes and kind smile, "and God bless the dear boy. Have I not desired this moment for him throughout many long years!"

Mr. Smith was soon by the side of Nina Allingworth, requesting yet another song, if she would not be fatigued by the exertion. He said her Italian airs had recalled to him thoughts of his dear Naples, where he had spent some happy years, and for a moment the old man's eye grew dim, as from a recollection rather of sorrow than of pleasure.

"What you have just sung was Neapolitan; I

heard it daily there fresh from the lips of the dark beauties of the peasantry, and you sang it, Miss Allingworth, not like an English woman, and there I pay you a high compliment, but now I have to ask you the favour of a true English song, sung as you have often sung it to me, in true English taste, and that, too, is a high compliment, for I respect the English as being not a false taste. Will you give me and this company the pleasure of listening to the ballad you made a favourite of mine, from the first time I heard it in among the 'bonnie braes' yonder? The little English ballad of 'The Mill-stream?'"

A slight accession of colour was observable on her cheek, and some hesitation also, as she permitted Mr. Smith to lead her back to the piano, and then she stopped, asking in a low voice, her eyes still bent downwards,

"Is there not some other song that Mr. Waltingham would honour by his selection instead of the one mentioned? Indeed I fear I could hardly sing it to-night, and before so many."

"Indeed, there is no other, no other that I care to hear to-night, till you have gratified me with this. You have made it an earnest desire with me, to listen to this ballad, and surely you need never doubt your power of performing anything in which your talent is so certainly called forth as in this. Nay, I cannot consent to withdraw my request."

She seated herself, therefore, though reluctantly, and turned her head slightly away, as her fingers strayed over the keys, in soft and flowing chords, till she seemed to regain nerve and power.

Then with a sudden animation which, while she curbed its too undisguised manifestation, was the evidence that music was lighting up within her inmost being emotions so deep and earnest as to be beyond any other means of expression; and while she, by her own sympathy with the harmonies she aroused (and here lies the secret of the art which to her came instinctively) awoke also the sympathy and the breathless attention of the company, she sang, in a rich, mellow voice, the little ballad of "The Millstream."

"The maiden by the mill-stream stood,
On the sparkling waters gazing;
Winds were sighing through the wood,
Doves were plaintive murmurs raising.

" 'Water-sprite, oh! water-sprite,
Ever dancing, ever singing;
Would all life, like thee, were bright,
Gladness and refreshment bringing!'

" 'Maiden, when thy star doth shine,
Nightly on my face from Heaven
In its lustre I divine,
Joy will to thy life be given.'

" 'Water-sprite, but did it tell,
Of the parting, fraught with sorrow?
Dost thou know that this farewell,
Dims to-day, and clouds to-morrow?'

" 'Maiden, all I read above,
But affection past forgetting,
Let some new more happy love,
Rise as that pale moon is setting.'

“ ‘Water-sprite, where spring doth burst,
 Earliest primrose is the fairest ;
 And, no love is like the first,
 Ever deepest, and the dearest.’

“ ‘Maiden ! what is past resign,
 From thy heart it must be riven ;
 For I, in thy star divine,
 Joy will to thy life be given.’

“ ‘Water-sprite, no circumstance,
 Can, from me, the past dis sever ;
 Time must ev’n true love enhance,
 Souls once bound are one for ever.’

“ ‘Maiden, holy, faithful, true,
 Now at length I am discerning ;
 That the joy which shall accrue,
 Is the loved one’s glad returning.’

“ Then the maiden on the stream,
 Cast sweet flowers, and while she pondered,
 On the hopeful, loveful dream,
 Homeward, by the wood she wandered.

“ Summers bloomed and ceased to shine,
 Still sang Water-sprite, each even,
 ‘Maiden, I can still divine,
 Joy shall to thy life be given.’

“ Till one sunny morn, she stood,
 In the sparkling mill-stream gazing ;
 Hark ! what sound is in the wood ?
 Where the doves their songs are raising ?

“ See the lightening of her eye,
 As a bounding step advanceth !
 The long absent now is nigh,—
 Water-sprite with gladness danceth,
 Singing, ‘ ’Twas my prophecy,
 Joy for this true hearted glanceth.’ ”

With powerful and thrilling tones, the last accents
 of her tale had pealed forth, and with crimsoned

cheek and sparkling eye, she remained a few seconds forgetful of all but the excited thoughts which her own voice had summoned—till the low murmured expression of "beautiful! beautiful!" rose from the listeners, and becoming gradually more distinctly uttered, struck jarringly on the sensitive ear of the singer. She arose quickly up, and moved some steps backwards. Several gentlemen were around her, expressing gratification and delight.

"It is so sweet a ballad, and so sweetly sung," began Mr. Smith, in whose eyes tears still sparkled, "that you must forgive this weakness."

She raised her eyes calmly to respond to his kind look, when the word "Nina, Nina," uttered close behind him, drove the colour from her cheek. It was as if a voice from the grave had sounded in her ears.

Antony was before her!

Their eyes met and flashed with a lightning vividness that electrified her—yes, and him also—to the heart. In that glance the tale of years was told.

Deadly pale, trembling, not daring again to look up, she stood, with difficulty concealing from the careless eyes around the extent or the cause of her emotion, when the voice of her kind host sounded in her ear.

"Dear Miss Allingworth, you are tired, the heat here oppresses you. Let me lead you to the refreshment room."

She turned gratefully towards him, when another arm was quickly held between his and her.

"Nina! Nina! trust yourself to me. For the sake of the long past, Nina."

But she drew back from the eager Antony hastily, and as if in alarm, and turning abruptly from him, took the arm of the prompt host, and was led away by him. The little scene had been noticed by few, and certainly understood by none save the sagacious Mr. Smith (for so we will, for the present call him, to avoid confusion) and, perhaps, by Ernest also, who from the opposite end of the room had watched with deep interest, and a quickly throbbing heart the movements of Antony, since the moment when a bystander had told him that not Lady Darcy but Nina Allingworth was before them, and a joyful hope of the possibility of his friend's final happiness burst gloriously upon his mind. But Ernest neither moved or spoke, he only looked, and hoped, and longed.

Away to the adjoining rooms, then, Mr. Smith conducted the trembling Nina. Her surprise at the sudden appearance at such a moment before her, of him whom she had parted with seven years previously, but who had never since then been absent from her heart—and her confusion at the consciousness of having by her song expressed that which might have been but too well applied to herself, and which she shrunk with horror from the thought of having suggested to others, so overpowered her for a time, that though she preserved sufficient self-command to cross

the apartments in which the company were assembled with the dignified composure which was peculiar to her, yet, when she found herself in the small study set apart for the refreshment room, and no longer the object of many scrutinizing looks, she leant back against the book cabinet, lining one side of the apartment, with a feeling of almost unconsciousness, which made her utterly incapable, for some moments, of either speech or motion.

Gradually, however, as her vigorous mind, maintaining its influence superior over every emotion or circumstance, resumed its power of reasoning and recollection, the happy thought started up within her that the deaf Antony could not have been aware of the purport of her song, and therefore that she could in no way have betrayed herself to him; indeed, had she not at the moment of her surprise, with an instinctive impulse of shrinking reserve, turned away from him, showing a preference for her kind and attentive host?—and the thought gave her an inexpressible relief, and enabled her shortly to raise her eyes with a composure no longer forced, and meet those of Mr. Smith, whose delicacy of feeling towards her touched her so as to awaken her heartfelt gratitude. He had, meanwhile, for some moments, left her alone, for, (need it be said?) Antony had followed. Yes, with a dejected mien, he had quietly followed, whilst a whirlwind of impetuous thoughts and emotions raged within him; and he now stood

without upon the staircase, for he dared not follow further, so acutely had he felt the repulse of Nina on his greeting, though it had been preceded by a look most eloquent and precious to him, and never to be forgotten. There he stood with folded arms, and with fiery glances fixed upon the half-opened door.

"Why, what servants we have to deal with in this world," began Mr. Smith as he came out with the large empty water glass, which he had brought from the table in his hand. "Waiters all gone, forgetting their business over ale cups down stairs I'll wager, and leaving behind tea, ices, and biscuits in shoals, but not one drop of cold water, which is all our young lady will have."

Antony snatched the glass from him. "Give it me; she shall not wait another instant," he cried, and fled down the stairs.

"So," resumed the old gentleman with a smile, as Antony speedily returned the vase filled with the sparkling water," what a boorish fellow the young lady must think Mr. Antony Nayton to be, frightening her so rudely out of her wits, pouncing down on her, like a hawk on a goldfinch, just after she had given us so pretty a song, too,—and did not I tell you to remain there in that snug hole of a window?"

"But, dear sir, how was it possible—how was it possible? you who heard that song——"

"Tush, tush—why, I knew it would be so; when one hasn't seen an old friend for some half dozen

years, one can't help being startled at the sudden apparition. Do you think I wouldn't jump like a shrimp if my grandmother were to spring up beside me? and old men have not such sensitive nerves as these young ladies, you know."

"But, dear sir, Nina—Miss Allingworth is waiting for this; shall I take it to her?"

"Nay, nay; stay where thou art, thou too valiant knight. Give me Water-sprite. I have other work for you to do. Wait till I bring you orders. Ha! Water-sprite and maiden are, we know, already on good terms, and the one has consoled the other on former occasions." And so saying, he hastened in.

And what was going on among the guests, meanwhile? Just this, dear readers—that no sooner had Ernest witnessed the departure of his friends, and observed that the hubbub of conversation wanted some impetus to set it in motion, and that without that some amusement was necessary to engage the attention of the company than leading Kate to the piano, he obliged her to sing with him a comic duet, with which they were accustomed to amuse one another, and which now soon attracted the interest and extracted the laughter of the listeners.

Then followed the recognition between the singers and Lady Allingworth and Sir William, who came forward cordially to renew their old acquaintance, and to congratulate Ernest and Miss Nayton on the

easily guessed happiness which was in store for both. Now were made inquiries after her brother, but ere Kate could reply Antony returned to request her in the name of their host to play a Polka or waltz, and thus summon the young people present to a short dance.

The welcome Antony received was kind and even affectionate, though at first it had been difficult for them to recognise the former deaf pupil in the evident man of the world and of fashion.

And then Nina returned with Mr. Smith, looking still, as ever, enchantingly lovely, though now more lily than rose-like, and with a slight timidity in her step and glances, evidently (to Antony) avoiding either to approach or to look towards him. But what mattered this to him, when he remembered the first look of the first recognition? Kathleen played, and the guests pushing aside the furniture, danced merrily, and the night became more and more exciting and enjoyed. Then Nina played, for she would not dance, and Ernest whirled round his happy Kathleen in the swift German Waltz, and many

“Hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose, with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love, to eyes which speak again;
And all went merry as a marriage bell,
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.”

but good dancers, dear readers, be not terrified; 'tis not as when the poet * wrote—

“The cannon's opening roar.”

* BYRON.

of the overture to *Waterloo* ; it was but the knell of a day, the great bell of the cathedral tolling out the hour of midnight, and the loud and reverberating tones struck close above the heads of the surprised listeners. The music ceased—the dancing ceased—and a certain feeling of awe and solemnity came over the hearts of all when Mr. Smith offered, as their merriment had been thus interrupted, to allow those of his guests, to whom it might be agreeable, a visit into the Cathedral by a short and private passage leading from an adjoining apartment down into the cloisters. It was a charming proposal, and received with approbation from many. Several of the young smiling couples trooped off, following the good-humoured host. Nina rose from the piano.

Antony was by her side ; he looked inquiringly in her face, and as she held her hand towards him he caught it eagerly, gratefully, and led her away.

CHAPTER X.

THE CATHEDRAL.—ALL MYSTERIES SOLVED.

THROUGH the dark passages and along the cloisters passed the company, following the lamps carried by Mr. Smith and some others of the gentlemen visitors to the cathedral. But here artificial light was not needed. Through the clerestory windows above and those of the aisles below gleamed the cold brilliancy of moonlight, telling out effectively the elaborate network of the decorative architecture of the windows, and flooding the interior of the edifice with its silvery light.

The stillness, the coldness, the hardness, the vastness of the place, together with the pallid clearness of the lustre in which all was bathed, that was not plunged in absolute darkness, impressed a feeling of solemnity on the minds of the visitors which had a varied effect on each.

Some of the ladies, frightened by the moonlit

pillars and monuments, as if they had been spectres, retreated speedily; others, talking loudly, in their desire to appear bold and fearless, started at the sound of their own voices, as they vibrated through the wide area; others, shuddering as if they had plunged into the chilling atmosphere of catacombs, turned away; all, ere long, satisfied with a scene which shed upon their young and sprightly natures a distressing gloom, left the sacred edifice in its silence, and hastened back again to warmth and life, and more genial light.

Two, however, remained behind. Antony and Nina still stood together in the cloisters, and had not yet even entered the church. They had been the last to leave the dancing-room, and lingered behind, in these beautiful moonlit passages. From the high windows, lining one side of their path, the whiteness of the summer night reflected itself upon the feathered-panelling of the opposite wall, and on the sumptuous fan-tracery of the vaulting above.

The company had passed on, out of hearing, and they remained alone. Mysterious moment, when long-loving parted spirits meet again! To these two that moment was as holy as it was beautiful. They spoke together, Nina turning her face, so that the moonlight could enable him to read her words upon her lips, or upon her fingers.

Now, readers, now, let us, invisible as we are, draw near.

"Nina, my only joy—my life,—I have obeyed you; I have followed the behests you gave me, when we parted. I have gone forth, with courage, with a mighty will, with a heart intent upon its duty. I have fulfilled your prophecy. Yes, and have I not become *great*?—for am I not, truly, wheresoever my path leads me, 'a mark of God's love and favour?' Those were your own prophetic words. Nina, have I not fulfilled them? Thus, thus, have I not won your love?"

"Not thus, dear Antony, for it was yours, long, long, before."

"Oh, rapture! and you could love the deaf boy?"

"What matters the outward infirmity, to the noble spirit? have you not yourself taught me, that by patience and faith 'every man may rise above his calamity?' these were your mother's words, before she knew the trial or the triumph that awaited her son. I have always remembered them. They are true."

"Noble, generous Nina, uncontaminated by the world's pride; pure-hearted one! and you will be mine?"

Her fingers spelt the words.

"Yours,—for ever!"

He laid his hand upon hers, clasping them both in his, as he spoke on.

"Nina, it had been, perhaps, presumptuous in the imperfect, the maimed Antony, to offer to bind

your life to his, but,—” and he spoke in louder and louder accents, “I am no longer this, Nina, I have heard your voice!”

She looked up at him, in the wondering silence of ecstasy; and he presently continued:—

“The miraculous word has been spoken. My ears are opened. Since I have been thus blest years have gone by, but never have I been so blessed as on this night. I have heard your voice. I listened to the words—

‘Time must e’en true love enhance,
Souls once bound are one for ever.’

and in the thrilling melody your heart spoke, Nina, I felt it, and the feeling gave me a wildly joyous courage. See here,” and he drew forth the small case that contained the purple flower; “when Nina gave me this, she said her memory of me would last, unchanged, so long as the everlasting petals retained their glossy hue. See you, how they glitter in this light? That soul-stirring song gave me a new interpretation to those words; its accents, blended with the never-forgotten voice of my mother, dwell in my heart for ever.”

They moved on into the cathedral; all there was quiet.

They stepped into the nave, and walked together through the solemn stillness and the glorious moonlight. Their footsteps, slow and quiet, gave no echo in the wide space around; which, not many hours

previously, had vibrated with the fullest harmonies. Their voices were still ; silenced by the overwhelming joy and gratitude within them ; silenced by the majesty around.

For these two, whose souls had for long years been growing up fit temples to that Deity, to whom they had willingly consecrated them ; for these two, who had striven through a weary period of time to keep all pure the thoughts, and passions, and desires, that dwelt within them ; for those two, who had put on, and constantly worn, the sacred robes of sublime Patience and Faith, the house of God could be neither too awful, nor too holy a spot, to witness their deepest emotions.

If, here, those hearts could be best laid bare before the eye of heaven, here, surely, they might be revealed to one another. And in their very silence, each heart spoke to the other, words that could never be forgotten.

Through the beautiful tracery of the west window brilliant stars gleamed out of the illuminated night, and looked joyfully upon the two, as they advanced towards it.

The vast heaven that opened itself without there, above them, and the whole earth, seemed then not more spacious than their own souls ; seemed not to hold more glowing suns, than their hearts held beams of the purest happiness.

* * * *

Leaving the Cathedral, they again entered the cloisters.

Here was the emblem of what life now was to them; a path, unlike, indeed, to the common highways of men—a path lined and over-canopied with an exquisite and solemn beauty—a path protected from the glare or the storms of the outer world—lighted up by the radiance of heavenly love, and leading on to the everlasting temple of the Divine presence.

They now again spoke; and Nina asked, of the wonderful miracle of the restoration of his hearing.

“A little child, who believed he was soon to die, saw, and loved me; and an earnest desire came into his mind, that I should hear his voice before he should leave the world. His desire became his daily and nightly prayer. It is to the love of this tender and affectionate boy, I owe my deliverance from the trial of my early youth. He induced me to permit an examination of my ears, for on this point he obtained a stronger influence over me than Ernest, or any other.”

(And here, dear readers, the little secret is revealed to you, which we have kept from you, as Ernest did from Kathleen, as long as we could).

Antony now reminded Nina that she herself had been unable to induce him to take any measures for the restoration of his hearing. The experiments made by the aurist at Cheltenham in his boyhood,

had imparted a belief that if ever he should permit himself to seek a cure for his calamity, the remedy might affect his reason or prove fatal. This feeling increased almost to a superstition, and as he believed it would be his fate, if he bore not in patience the calamity already appointed him, to suffer miseries far more frightful, he had resolved not to permit the arguments of his friends to tempt him to that which appeared to him a sin, and to bear with unmurmuring submission, the adversity to which he had been doomed. This resolution, and this belief, did not pass even when, the ears being examined by two of the first medical practitioners in London, it was pronounced in their opinion, possible, by an operation which would be however attended with danger, to remove from the tympanum, that which had for so many years compressed it and impeded sound. Ernest had also believed this, when on his first knowledge of the deaf and dumb lad, he had examined these organs; but he then saw also the danger of the trial, and that it could not be attempted with hope of success or safety, till Antony should have become older and of more vigorous frame, since his gloomy and unhappy manner of life in the family of his tutor where little care was taken of his health, had contributed to debilitate his highly sensitive nerves to a degree, which would have rendered any operation at that time perilous.

So Antony had remained fixed in his resignation and endurance. The child, however was unceasing

in his anxiety and in his prayers also. There was something in the angel-like character of the boy which obtained a strange power over Antony. He looked upon him almost as a messenger from above. The tears which he shed when in the cemetery at Brussels he spoke to the deaf friend of his fear that death would arrive ere the wish of his heart was fulfilled, so affected Antony, that he began to feel that it was now a duty to the dying boy to listen to his request, and permit that to be done which might give any prospect of success, though indeed there was more cause for fear in it than hope.

The child would not believe there could be danger if the matter were entrusted to Ernest, and, indeed, he was aware that the young physician had latterly (since his speedy departure from Ponterry) concentrated his whole attention, time, and practise, on that branch of his profession, which might prove of highest importance to his deaf friend.

Thus Percy Melville sent for his cousin, to Spa, when he believed himself dying, and extracted a promise from Antony that he would accompany Ernest to Brussels, there to meet another and an eminent surgeon, whose advice and assistance Sir Frederick Melville had engaged to relieve Ernest's weight of doubt and responsibility, and there to make the great trial, on which it seemed the whole of his future life depended.

"Need I confess that at this eventful time thoughts of you, Nina, hopes of becoming worthy of you, of

one day presenting myself to you as one not unfit to demand your love, burnt up with irresistible power in my heart, and gave me a daring valour in rushing to my uncertain fate! when, as I crossed the street leading me to the scene of my trial, lo, Lord Darcy led his bride from the door of the hotel to his carriage. They told me that bride was Nina; Ernest was by my side and he believed—though with a fiery indignation—Miss Allingworth was his bride.—Ernest believed Nina Allingworth had rejected his love for the hand of the nobleman,—he, therefore, could harbour no doubt. The Lady Darcy passed before our eyes too quickly for our recognition, but I believed it was Nina, for in truth my bewildered eyes saw nothing. Now imagine, Nina, with what reckless despair I went on to the venturous struggle. Truly I endured it not for my own sake, nor for yours, but only for the sake of the dying Percy.

“It was done! The winds of sound found access to my brain! But for days I lay in an illness which was expected to be my last, and I now believed that Percy and I would indeed shortly meet, but not on earth. I struggled, however, to command strength to return to him, and the malady was held off, and I resumed my powers sufficiently to hasten back to Spa. The stormy night, the awful journey, the effect of its noise and uproar on my enfeebled nerves, then, at length, the arrival at the desired spot, and the scene which there awaited me, I can never, never, forget. I hear all now in my mind, as if it were but

yesterday. I entered the room of the sick child ; I heard his voice ; and we thanked God together for, that ecstasy. No voice, no sound, has ever been like that to me ; for all that I hear now, even your's, Nina, and my mother's voice, vibrates from the atmosphere of earth—these tones gave me a foretaste of what sounds will be beyond—beyond—there !

“ I knew not, then, that I should ever hear that voice again on earth. It has still the same beauty to me. Ah, how I longed to die ! My malady returned with overwhelming power. The belief that I had seen Nina, in the bride of Darcy, had fallen as a blow upon my heart—what did life possess for me now, even though the luxury of all nature's music was no longer withheld from me ? But I lived, and I endured, and I believed, Nina, I must ever endure, while living, the grief which had taken possession of my soul. And now ; ah ! could I not live it all over and over again for such an hour as this ? ”

And now they spoke of the strange fact of Clara Allingworth having become Lady Darcy ; the more unaccountable to Antony, as both he and Ernest had, he well remembered, remarked together, the strong dislike which appeared to exist between the two ; and Nina could only reply, that from this seeming hatred, a feeling of an entirely different nature had arisen, during their meetings in London, after quitting Ponterry.

Nina had herself fallen ill, and was thus detained a prisoner, while the young Clara was introduced

into the gay scenes which suited well her lively nature. She rode daily in the Parks with her father, and daily met Lord Darcy, while both found the other's tastes and humours to correspond far more than they had believed. They were shortly afterwards engaged to one another; and the wedding would have taken place earlier had not Nina's illness occasioned a delay.

"There is yet another mystery, though, of a different kind, which I am curious to have explained," said Antony;" and it concerns him who has been to me a most valuable friend, and to whose kindness, and even penetration also, I believe I owe the happiness of to-night. I fancy he desired to give us both a glad surprise, Nina, for he had not mentioned to me the fact of your being his expected guest; and he had also kept back from you the knowledge of my being no longer deaf."

"Do you speak of your dear uncle?" she asked.

"My uncle, Nina?"

"But see—he is here; he can explain all himself. He is coming to bring home his lost children. I fancy we must have been missed from among the company."

As she spoke, Mr. Smith advanced along the cloister, holding a lamp and the keys of the entrance. Antony's voice, as he had asked, in surprise, "My uncle—Nina?" had been heard by him; and as he now stood before them, tears were sparkling in his eyes. He set down the light in one of the stone

niches, and laid his hand tenderly on the arm of Antony.

"My dear young friend," he said, in an agitated voice, "I had once a sister, whom I loved very, very fondly. She was your mother."

Antony clasped his hands—gazed eagerly, almost imploringly, in the honoured face, and fell upon his neck, as the old man pressed him to his heart, in a warm embrace. Then he took the hand of Nina, and laid it on that of Antony.

"So, my children, I have not been mistaken—you love, and your love shall be blessed; for so, indeed, I truly believe, Heaven wills. How long and how sorely that love has been tried, with both of these true, young hearts, perhaps no one knows so well as myself. I read all."

"Dear uncle—best and kindest of men!" began Antony.

"You wonder, perhaps, my dears, at the sagacity of such an old, strange fellow as I seem; but the truth is, where my own heart, which has been long lonely in the world, becomes interested in those of others, all my faculties are easily enlisted in its service; and thus I found eyes to look into yours. When I first saw and knew my nephew Antony, I was suffering from a domestic sorrow, which had wounded me deeply. I had left Naples, never to return to it; for the ingratitude of one, whom I had loved as a daughter, had embittered my existence there; I was becoming a misanthrope; but I now

became acquainted with a young, a brave, and also, what is rare, a *pure* heart. I resolved, my nephew should not be acquainted with the relationship which connected us. That I would know him, and know him for years, thoroughly, in every part of his character, ere he should know me. I saw that he suffered from a sorrow of the heart, and not only from the consequences of his calamity; and when he stood beside me in the streets of Brussels, and as Lord Darcy had passed us with the daughter of Sir William Allingworth, I heard the name of 'Nina,' escape the lips of the unhappy Antony; I understood all, and I wept for him as if he had been my own son. But when afterwards, I visited Scotland, and found there a Nina Allingworth, who listened with an intense interest to my tales of Antony, and could sing so touchingly of 'Maiden and Water-sprite,' he added, laughing, "and with whom the old uncle became a little bit of a favourite, for the sake, I imagined, of the nephew, why then, it was not so difficult for me to guess how the truth stood—and—but why are we wasting words and time here; cloisters were made for monks, and nuns you know; for such poor bachelors as myself perhaps; but never for such happy young things as these; come, you need not be abashed at showing your handsome faces up there in the drawing-room, for the company are gone long ago, and I have since had time, while Doctor Forsythe and Miss Nayton were in deep conversation,

to discuss the contents of my last will and testament, with Sir William. Nay! do not look frightened; thinking about it does not kill a man, you know.

"Lady Allingworth was for following her runaway daughter, and bringing her back, I suppose, before an elopement should take place, but I managed to quiet her ladyship, reminding her, that there had been more probability of such an event in former years, when the young people roamed freely in the halls and gardens of Llanawr, than there is now, when matters are altogether more '*couleur de rose*.'"

So saying, having resumed the lamp, he led the way up stairs, through the secret passage, laughing, chuckling, and twinkling his eyes merrily. "I will not fail to call on your father to-morrow; no more need, now, to fear showing myself in these quarters, since my secret is out. I had some difficulty in avoiding the sharp eyes of Miss Joan Singlevie, to-day; but we will all meet to-morrow."

As they reached the apartments Nina hurried on quickly to the side of her mother, and the old gentleman beckoning his nephew into the study where Sir William Allingworth sat, closed the door.

What was said and done, then and there, need hardly be here recorded at length. The result may be quickly spoken. Antony Nayton was accepted by Sir William as his future son-in-law, and was made by his uncle the heir of Llanawr Park, and the estates appertaining thereto.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR LAST STANZA.

AND now my readers will ask — “Have we not arrived at the last passage of the allegro? Have we not by this time wound up all the variations?” Yes, yes, only a few bars remain.

From Augustus arrived the agreeable tidings of his promotion, and of his probable return ere long to Great Britain for a short visit, when he had the intention of putting in order the Irish property, and setting its resources to work, so that he might hope some years hence, when he should settle down in his native land for the rest of his life, that his father might be enabled to spend his old age on the thriving property, which had in former times occasioned him only anxiety and disappointment.

He mentioned, also, that he was now the happiest of men, since he was living in an atmosphere of heiresses, and had learned from confidential friends, that by two, in particular, among these *gifted* ladies,

his addresses were likely to be encouragingly received, and the question was now, whether he should yield to the impulse of love, or of policy; for that she whom he admired most, for her amiabilities and beauty, with whom he feared in fact he was regularly in love, possessed fewer rupees than the second rival for his favour, and the gold and jewels of this latter wore, to his mental eye, a most inviting aspect.

This important contest, however, terminated at length triumphantly for the cause of love, and the wedding-day was already fixed, when the last lines were added to the letter just before the departure of the mail.

* * * * *

With what happy tears did the faithful nurse lay out the bridal dress for the young lady now—for the second time, for the last, and, most certainly, the gladdest—as she looked forward thankfully to the coming years, that promised rest and comfort for herself, by the side of her she had so long served, and happiness and love to the young Kathleen herself.

* . * * * *

“Well, Joan,” observed Bess Singlevie, with spirit unusual in her, as she conversed with her sister—the subject now being Antony’s recovery—“well, after all your abuse of poor Mr. Goall, and the persecution he received from the whole town for alleged quackery, I must say the opinion he formed concerning Antony’s deafness, was truer and of more value than anything we could get out of Haler about it.”

"I never thought Goall had an opinion to give that was worth listening to, much less recollecting for a dozen years; I therefore do not know what you mean," returned the other with a tone of indifference.

"Why, didn't he say that before Antony could be cured, he ought to have shower baths, and live very generously, which of course meant take plenty of wine."

"And pray do you suppose, Bess, that Antony has been making himself a victim to Goall's abominable vinegar and salt water shower baths ever since?"

"Come, Joan, don't be sarcastic; you know he has been frequently, in the course of his travels, at the German watering places; now, he very probably used the baths when there, and he was certainly in the land of vineyards while in Germany, so that——"

"So that you consider Rhenish wines a cure for deafness. Well, something new to me, I confess."

"Indeed, it was but the other day that I heard it asserted as an acknowledged fact, that nothing is so invigorating to the constitution as these very wines," said Bess, triumphantly.

Joan, somewhat disconcerted by the superior knowledge of her sister on this point, began to fear that for once she had the worst of the argument, but quickly regained self-possession as she remarked:

"You seem to have forgotten that Antony's constitution had not time to experience the advantages

of your dear wines and baths before the cure was effected,—that having taken place, I believe, five or six years ago. Now, Mr. Haler said, you know, that he must be placed in the hands of an aurist, and when this was done, why, the end was gained.”

“Dr. Forsythe is not an aurist,” replied the other with some irritation.

“No; but Dr. What’s-his-name, who was engaged by Sir Frederick Melville to assist young Forsythe, was a very clever practitioner in that line.”

“I can’t help it, Joan, you will always have an answer. I only know poor Goall was, certainly, not wrong.”

“And I merely assert positively, that dear Mr. Haler was right, as he always is.”

“Well, no matter, it is all the same in the end, since our nephew is recovered,” began the other, in a conciliating voice; “but that recovery was certainly very—*very* wonderful!”

“Not at all,” interposed the provoking Joan; “I always expected it from the beginning. I believe I always said so. I certainly felt convinced it would be so.”

“You never said so, Joan.”

But we will not follow farther this little quarrel, knowing that, with these ladies, where one dispute ends, another will assuredly begin.

But let it not be supposed that this talent for conflict did in any degree embitter the lives of the Misses Singlevie. On the contrary, it formed, as we

may say, a source of happiness to both. There are, indeed, among mankind many such spirits that, like knives, require, if they are to be good for anything, to be constantly sharpened; and are easiest polished and brightened by frequent striking and clashing together.

The Misses Singlevie may therefore be considered among the happiest of spinsters.

Mr. Forsythe arrived from Wales expressly to celebrate the double weddings of his son, and his son's friend. He appeared older, but not less happy in his own devout and humane heart, than when Antony first knew him.

The wedding tour of Antony and Nina was to Llanawr Park, for the hearts of both yearned to visit once more the dear scenes of their early love.

And the day of their arrival was the gala day for Ponterry.

The news of the marriage had flown about among the villagers, and they looked forward to the return amongst them of him, who, as the deaf lad, they had so loved and honoured, with true delight; and Miss Allingworth, too, had they not all known cause to love the benevolent young lady, who had never forgotten the poor, or the sick, or those that were in trouble?

The desired day came, the bridal carriage arrived in T——, it was telegraphed on to the expectant peasantry, by the swift feet of Howel Philips' sons,

running across the meadows to the village. A triumphal arch had been raised for them, and flowers were strewn upon their path, and into the carriage, as the four horses dashed swiftly along the road. Cries of joy and loud hurrahs greeted them on all sides, from the running crowd, and the old church bells rang merrily.

As Antony passed along through the well remembered scenes, recollections of the distant times flocked upon his mind. It was as if he lived over again that day, when his friendship for Ernest was new-born ; when, for the first time in his young life, he had received from his fellow-men expressions of regard, of gratitude, and even of love, when, a sickly and suffering child, he had looked forward with aching eyes at the misty distance of life, and wondered what trials and what solitudes it held for him.

All since then had changed with him, and yet, here, in the old home, all looked the same. The same, yes, and he felt the same ; at the sight of these well-known scenes and objects, he became again, in feeling, that anxious boy—the patient hopeless one ; thinking on the dear, already adored Nina, with the holiest tenderness, yet thinking of her as a brilliant star, too high and too heavenly to be aspired to.

See, here stands the school-house, the honeysuckle taps at the window, the boys and girls rush out, to add their greeting to that of the elder villagers. See, also, their young school-mistress, it is Rachel, the little Rachel, whom Antony saved from the fire. See,

there is the spot where Nina stood, and looked on him on that bright day, which is now present to him—looked on him, with so kind a smile.

Antony turns his head, as then, to gaze back once more at that spot, and lo, he meets the tearful eyes of the beloved and the happy wife, and she rests her hand in his, and leans upon his shoulder, and looks confidingly, devotedly upon him. Now he presses her fondly to him, crying:—

“She is mine—my own!”

The past has vanished from his imagination, and the glorious present shines brilliantly upon his whole soul.

At the lodge, the carriage stops, as they unfasten the park-gates, and the bride shakes the hand of Howel Philips and of the matron Gladis, and of their two blooming sons. There, too, is Mrs. Evans, bobbing curtsies in numerous succession, playing with the corner of her apron, and wiping her eyes with it, as she exclaims:—

“Well, sure, indeed, what a fine looking gentleman he has grown, who would have thought it?” and Antony, standing up in the carriage, waves his hat to those that gather round with loud cries of welcome.

He speaks; he gives them his heartfelt greeting, and tells them that he has been given back his hearing, that their voices resound joyfully in his ears.

Then bursts forth a shout of joy and wonder, an utterance of praise, therefore, a hallelujah, which, as even the most silent breathings of gratitude in the

secret heart, sounded through space beyond the gates of heaven.

* * * * *

Readers, kind and indulgent friends, one more bar of music must be breathed, and in it let the fullest tones of our organ, with the deep key note, and its corresponding chord, resound forth.

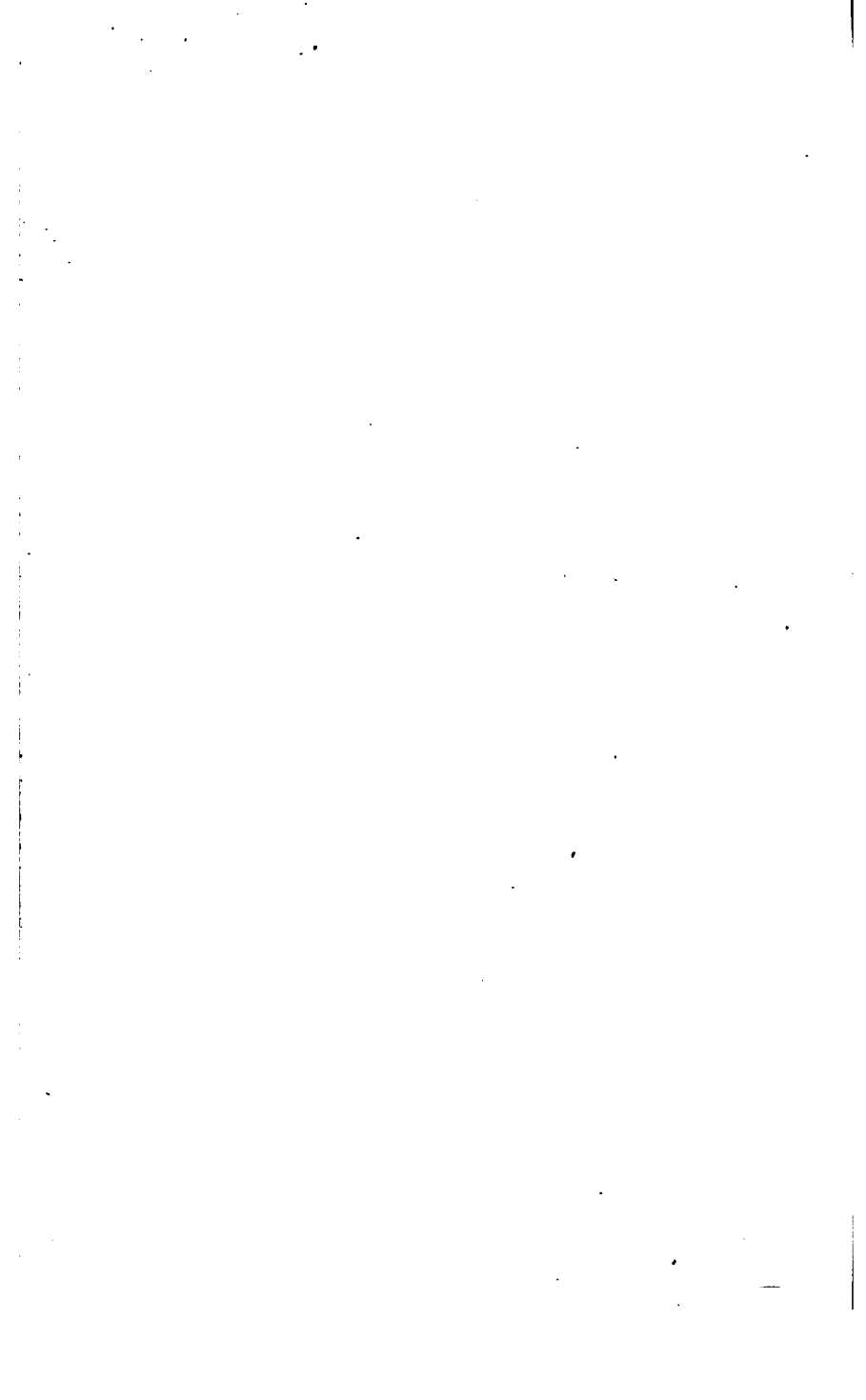
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That evening, Antony and Nina stood together beneath the picture of his mother, looking tenderly upon it; Nina's head resting on his breast.

"Ah! that dear smile! Beneath its light, my Nina, our mutual love was born; beneath its light, emanating and descending on us, from heaven, that love has lived and prospered; stood the shocks of blast and tempest; grown to full bloom, and now wraps us in the peaceful shadow of its everlasting boughs. And that smile is still upon us; for did not she, thus smiling as she died, give up her spirit in peace and confidence, praying that on her son might descend the blessing of heaven? Time has worked out that prayer—her son is blest—divinely blest." And he pressed the beloved Nina joyfully to his heart.

"Ah, my Nina! years of suffering are never in vain. A great result comes at last; either here, or there—only have patience—patience!"

THE END.



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